



# Fort Larned National Historic Site

## *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*



# **Fort Larned** **National Historic Site**

## *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*

Prepared by the Department of Interpretive Planning  
Harpers Ferry Center  
and  
Fort Larned National Historic Site

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Commissary (Top) and  
Quartersmaster Store (Bottom)



# INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING BACKGROUND

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### Introduction

Fort Larned was a lonely outpost on the vast Kansas prairie which provided protection for mail coaches and freight caravans on the Santa Fe Trail during the turbulent period known as the “Indian Wars.” The fort was home to both infantry and cavalry units, including a troop of African-American soldiers known as “Buffalo Soldiers.” Many famous people came to the fort during its heyday, including General George Custer, Buffalo Bill, Kit Carson, and Indian Chiefs Black Kettle, Satanta, and Yellow Bear.

While most forts from that time were torn down or have deteriorated over the years, Fort Larned survives largely intact due to its sandstone construction and private owners recognizing its historic significance. Visitors to the fort today are delighted to find one of the most complete and authentic forts remaining from the 1860s and 1870s. Nine original buildings, most beautifully restored inside and out, surround the parade ground and await exploration. The reconstructed Blockhouse and flagpole add to the overall understanding of the historic appearance of the cultural landscape. The park visitor center includes a museum, audio-visual programs, and a bookstore.

Staff and volunteers recreate the “Old West” with living history programs on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays during the summer, and occasionally at other times of the year. Other park features include a picnic area with shaded tables, visible Santa Fe Trail ruts at a detached site which includes an

active prairie dog town and a nature/history trail.

Fort Larned is located about 55 miles south of Interstate 70 from Hays, Kansas. The park entrance is six miles west of Larned on Kansas Highway 156. Visitors drive about ¼ mile to a parking area, and then walk across a bridge over the Pawnee River to the historic fort.

### Planning Background

Fort Larned National Historic Site does not have a long-range interpretive plan (LRIP). The last parkwide interpretive planning effort was an interpretive prospectus prepared in 1994 as a component of a general management plan (GMP) amendment. Both the GMP and the interpretive prospectus were approved in 1994. These earlier planning documents contain a number of recommendations for improving the park’s interpretive media and facilities, and many have been implemented. In addition, the Santa Fe National Historic Trail, a separate unit of the NPS, developed an interpretive prospectus in 1991. This plan provides trailwide perspectives and recommendations that have some contextual applications for Fort Larned.

Since the development of these earlier plans, a number of changes have occurred in park facilities, resources, visitor use, resource knowledge, interpretive media, programs, and management issues. The possible acquisition of the 1866-67 Cheyenne/Sioux Indian Village site on the Pawnee River in Ness County would create new opportunities and challenges for the park’s overall interpretive program.

A new GMP amendment will soon be initiated to propose the removal

of the current Pawnee River bridge and relocation of the fort entrance to its historic location. Associated with these actions is a proposal to significantly reduce the number and visual impact of modern elements from the landscape of the core fort area, by reconstructing the sutler complex, and using these buildings for relocating the visitor center.

All of the wayside exhibits are old and do not comply with current NPS graphic identity standards. Also, some of the park's interpretive media does not interpret multiple perspectives, current scholarship, and the compelling meanings associated with the park's resources.

The park also desires to improve and expand education (by developing a collaborative curriculum-based education program) and outreach

opportunities, continue and/or expand existing partnerships, and create a stronger identity with visitors and area residents.

This LRIP will be a component of the park's comprehensive interpretive plan (CIP) as directed by National Park Service Director's Orders-6. This plan will provide long-term direction and focus for the interpretive program for Fort Larned National Historic Site. Together with the park-produced annual interpretive plan and the interpretive database, it will form a complete CIP. The LRIP will describe the park's primary interpretive themes and visitor experiences, and recommend ways to facilitate those experiences through facility design, interpretive/informational media, personal services programs, and partnership endeavors.



Fort Larned  
Historic Photo

## Park Purpose

Purpose statements describe the reasons for which a park area was established. These statements are based on an area's enabling legislation and legislative history.

Fort Larned National Historic Site was authorized by Public Law 88-541 in 1964 to commemorate the significant role played by Fort Larned in the opening of the west.

Presently containing 718.39 (410 acres fee simple and the remainder in scenic easement), the park preserves, protects, and interprets original and reconstructed buildings and a partially reconstructed cultural landscape from the Indian Wars era. Many of the buildings are fully restored and furnished, making Fort Larned one of the best examples of a frontier military fort on the Plains. The park also contains a 44.44 acre tract of unbroken prairie, which contains clearly visible wagon ruts from the Santa Fe Trail and an active prairie dog town.

These resources are preserved in perpetuity and make this valuable part of America's heritage available to visitors for their experience, enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation.

## Park Significance

Significance is summarized in statements that capture the essence of a site's importance to our natural and cultural heritage. Significance statements are not the same as an inventory of significant resources. While a resource inventory can be the basis, significance statements describe the importance or distinctiveness of the aggregate resources. Knowing a site's significance helps set resource protection priorities, identify

primary interpretive themes, and develop desirable visitor experiences.

The following statement describes the significance of the resources of Fort Larned National Historic Site:

Fort Larned, because of its large number of authentically restored and furnished buildings and surrounding reconstructed grasslands, is the finest example of an Indian Wars military post on the Santa Fe Trail. It demonstrates the role that military posts played in cultural interchange among the variety of peoples (military, travelers and Plains Indians) along the Santa Fe Trail.

## Park Primary Interpretive Themes

Primary interpretive themes are those ideas/concepts that are critical for achieving visitor understanding and appreciation of the significance of Fort Larned National Historic Site. Primary themes do not include everything that may be interpreted, but they do provide the foundation from which programs and media are developed. All interpretive efforts, through both personal and non-personal services, should relate to one or more of the primary themes. Effective interpretation results when visitors are able to connect concepts (intangibles) with resources (tangibles) and derive something meaningful from the experience.

The following interpretive themes are critical to visitor understanding and appreciation of the park's importance. The numbers are strictly for reference and do not signify any prioritization.

1. The road to Santa Fe, or the Santa Fe Trail, increased





Garrison Flag over fort

trade, travel, commerce and consequent rich cultural exchange across the growing American West

2. Through Fort Larned and other associated military posts, the U.S. Government established its authority and control and extended its influence throughout the region.
3. The culture and lifestyle of the Plains Indians were irreversibly altered by encroaching non-native people.
4. People from a variety of cultures interacted at Fort Larned and all along the Trail, including European Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, (both soldiers and civilians).
5. The plains environment significantly influenced the lives of all who lived upon them, and they in turn were significantly altered by the human presence.

## Santa Fe Trail Trailwide Themes

In addition to the park-specific themes, the Santa Fe National Historic Trail developed an interpretive prospectus for the entire trail in 1991. Since interpretation at Fort Larned National Historic Site should include the broader contexts, the applicable trailwide themes are:

*The Santa Fe Trail became a bridge for international trade and commerce between the United States and Spanish territory. Despite many earlier attempts to establish the bridge, the Spanish government effectively blocked trade.*

*The Santa Fe Trail was a significant link for trade and commerce in the trail network across the North American continent in the 1800s.*

*Opening the trail had far-reaching effects on the United States, the provinces of northern Mexico, and American Indians.*

*Survival depends on successful interaction with natural forces.*

*Conflict occurs when different peoples do not understand each other or have different goals,*

*Human needs and desires do not change, only the means by which they are achieved.*

## Visitor Experience Goals

Few visitors come to parks solely to learn. While interpretive themes can be viewed as cognitive goals (things people should learn), visitor experience goals describe what other physical, intellectual, sensory, and emotional experiences should be available. It is what visitors do, feel, think, and learn which includes knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and values. The overall visitor experience is affected by events prior to the visit and affects behavior after the visit.

Visitors come to parks seeking something of personal value and relevance. Since interpretive themes address the cognitive elements, visitor experience goals outline other available opportunities that visitors should be aware of as they interact with park and area resources, staff, and other visitors.

People who visit Fort Larned National Historic Site will have opportunities to experience the resources in a number of ways and levels. Those ways are listed in priority order as follows:



### Higher Emphasis

- Experience historically accurate buildings, furnishings and landscapes.
- Get the feeling of being transported back in time.
- See the Santa Fe Trail
- Understand multiple cultural perspectives of the fort's history.
- Experience the fort through multiple senses.
- See elements of the natural environment.
- Easily access park buildings and exhibits.
- Understand the fort's impact on various cultures.
- Have a safe visit.

### Medium Emphasis

- Experience aspects of 1860s - 1870s military life.
- Experience the park at their own pace and according to their own Feel what it was like to be stationed at an isolated military post.
- Interact with NPS staff.
- Gain an appreciation for the National Park Service and its mission.

### Lesser Emphasis

- Discover elements of the class system that existed at the fort.
- Experience life at the fort even when facilities are unstaffed.
- Purchase interpretive / educational materials.
- Discover that there are similar sites related to Ft. Larned's Indian Wars and Santa Fe Trail themes, and how to visit them.
- Engage in hands-on experiences.
- Choose from a variety of interpretive and educational programs and activities.
- interests, abilities, and time requirements.

- Easily find the park and key sites within it.
- Find meanings and relevance in the resources even if they are unable to visit in person.
- Leave with a positive feeling and desire to return.
- Learn something about each of the interpretive themes.



Indian Camp

## Visitation and Visitor Use

The following information regarding park visitors and visitor use is derived from data maintained by the NPS Socio-Economic Services Division (WASO) in Denver, the GMP, the Servicewide Interpretive Report, and discussions with park staff and partners. No extensive formal visitor survey has been conducted at Fort Larned.

Table 1 shows the total number of recreation visits to Fort Larned National Historic Site over the last 10 years. This table clearly shows a slight decline in visitation since 1998. The park attributes this decline to the increased cost of gasoline, less interest in museum experiences, and a drop in school visits due to reduced budgets and the demands of new testing requirements.

Table 2 illustrates the total monthly recreation visits for 2007. Visitation follows a typical profile of a gradual increase in the spring, a peak in the summer (when schools are out and more people are on vacation), and a decline through the fall and winter. School groups account for much of the fall visitation.

Park staff estimates that peak visitation days are the Memorial Day Weekend and other special event days. On these days up to 500 people visit the park. Throughout the year the heaviest visitor use occurs on Saturdays and Sundays. On these days the park has about fifty percent more visitors than on any other day of the week. Most visitors

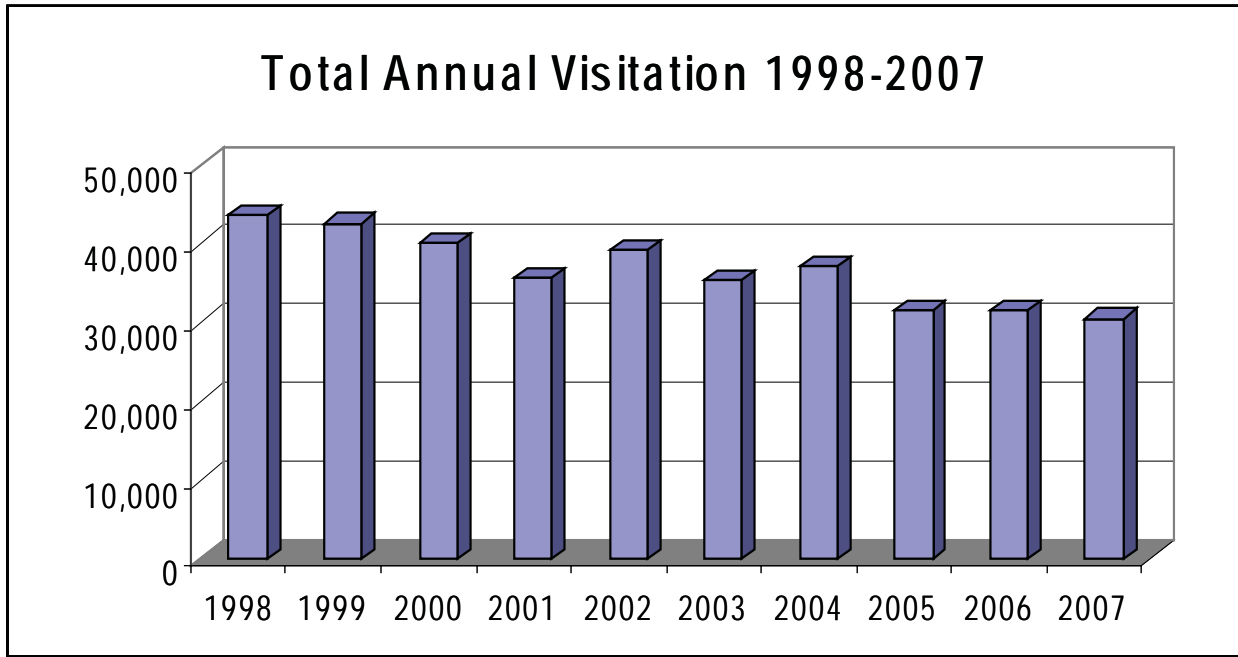


Table 1

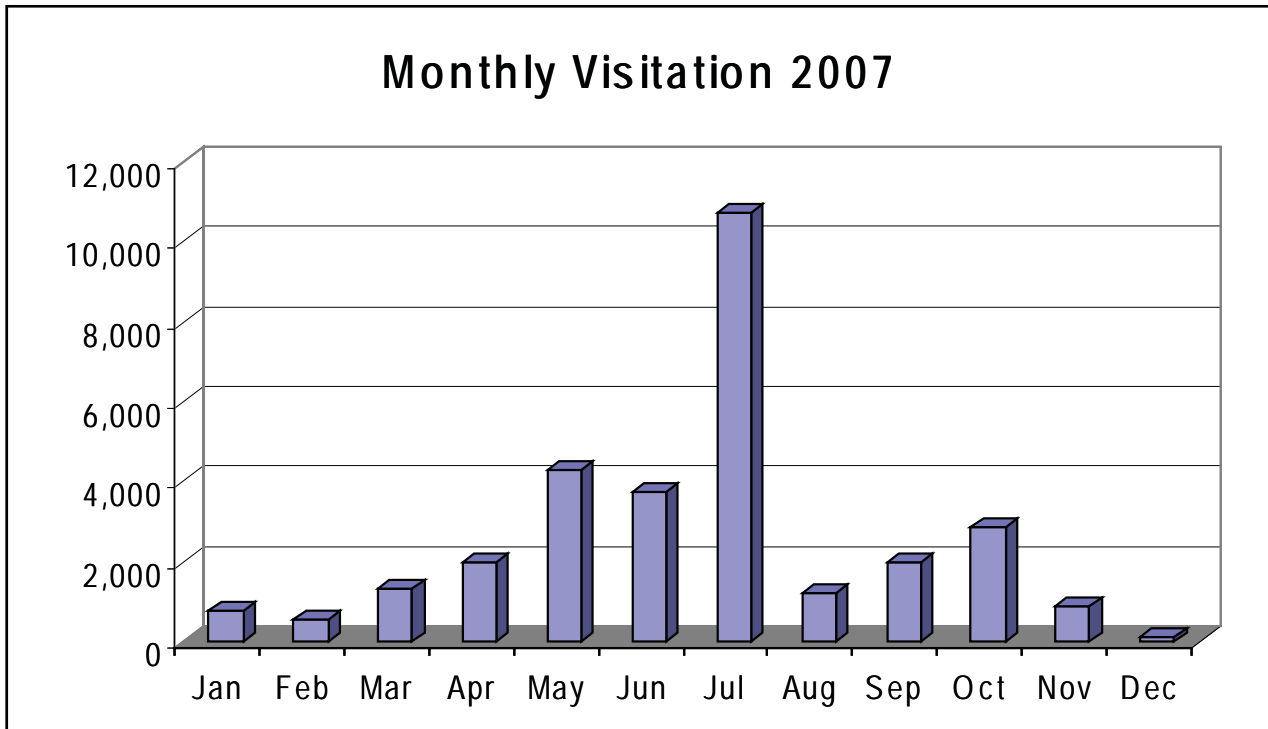


Table 2

(estimated at slightly over 50%) live in Kansas, and foreign visitors account for about three percent of the total annual visits.

The typical length of stay in the park is about two hours. The main visitor activity is touring the historic buildings, either alone or with a guided tour. Visitation far exceeds the norm on days when special events such as living history programs and military reenactments are held.

Other cumulative data for 2007 from the park's Monthly Public Use Report states that:

- 9,606 Visitors entered the visitor center.
- 4,063 visitors viewed the audiovisual program.
- 1,240 visitors attended 73 guided tours.
- 8,801 contacts were made at attended stations other than the visitor center.

The park's submission to the FY 2007 Servicewide Interpretive Report shows that:

- 9,193 visitors were contacted at the visitor center.
- 11,409 people were reached through informal interpretation.
- 4,895 visitors attended a total of 144 formal interpretive activities.
- 1,650 visitors attended a total of 161 interpretive demonstrations or performing arts programs.
- 136 people participated in the Junior Ranger Program.
- 1,329 people attended a total of five special events at the park.
- 675 students participated in the park education program.

The Santa Fe National Historic Trail was established in 1987. One of the management goals is to promote visitation to various sites along the trail, resulting in people

learning more about its relevance and significance. Although it was projected in its GMP that the Trail's establishment would result in increased visitation, there is still no evidence to support this claim. Combined visitation statistics from Fort Larned NHS, Bent's Old Fort NHS, Pecos National Historical Park and Fort Union NHS of 117,834 visits in 2003 compared to 99,265 visits in 2007 is a 16% decrease in visitation.

## Existing Conditions Assessment

The following is a brief and generalized description of visitor experiences, issues, and interpretive media and programs as they existed at the onset of this long-range interpretive planning process. Emphasis is purposely placed on deficiencies, issues, and concerns that will be addressed in the plan's recommendations, rather than on things that are working well or that are beyond the scope of a LRIP. The purpose of this section is to provide a baseline assessment that can help to justify some of the plan's proposed actions.

### Information and Orientation

There is a need to improve the information provided to on-line visitors both before and during their visit to the park, as well as for people who may never be able to visit in person and in ways promoting visitation to Fort Larned and other similarly-themed sites along the Trail.

Improvements are needed in the types and methods of providing on-arrival information/orientation to visitors. This applies to people traveling area highways, visiting other area attractions, or just arriving in the parking lot.

Visitors arriving at the park entrance or at the parking lot need better



Entrance Sign and Sculpture

orientation to park resources. Currently many people come to the picnic area at the park entrance and never proceed further. Others drive to the parking lot, turn around, and leave. There is no vivid or compelling information to show people what lies just across the river and cannot be seen from the parking lot.

Improvements are needed in providing consolidated information regarding area visitor attractions, especially those with strong interpretive links to the park such as the Santa Fe Trail Center.

Information about the self-guiding trail and the Santa Fe Trail ruts area of the park is not readily available or easy for visitors to find.

### **Visitor Center**

A portion of one of the historic buildings of the fort serves as the visitor center, which contains a lobby, staffed information desk, bookstore, exhibit room, and a theater.

The exhibits date to the 1970s. The displays are dated, worn, and

contain no interactive elements. Some of the cases can only be viewed from the top, making viewing difficult for small children or people in wheelchairs to see inside. Some of the American Indian items were on loan from West Point and have been returned for conservation. It is not known whether the items will come back to the park.

The AV program shown in the theater is a slide show also dating from the 1970s. The program uses mainly stylized art work and it does not portray a modern perspective of the American Indian role in the historical events or cultural exchanges occurring at the Fort.

### **History/Nature Trail**

The History/Nature Trail is an approximately one mile walk between the Pawnee River woodlands and Oxbow out into the grasslands. The main purpose of the trail is to give visitors an opportunity for discovering locations of non-extant buildings and the former location of a post cemetery. A trail brochure locating the various sites is “keyed” to numbered posts at those sites.



Visitor Center Exhibits



The grasslands are undergoing continuing restoration from cultivated fields into prairie landscape resembling the native grasses that might have existed during the Forts earlier period. Although the brochure is informative, it is not in the current NPS Unigrid format. Only one stop is devoted to the “nature” theme. However, small moveable markers for identifying plants and relating their ecology and uses by Plains Indians are set out during the spring and summer. Unfortunately, it is rather difficult to identify the plants from the line drawings on the signs.

### **Wayside Exhibits**

None of the existing wayside exhibits comply with current NPS graphic identity standards. The current exhibits represent different types and styles that have been installed over several decades. As a result, they do not always speak with one voice in terms of colors, designs, and materials, and they do not conform to the new sign standards in all respects. More importantly, many of the waysides do not attract and hold the interest of 21<sup>st</sup> century visitors.

### **Historic Furnishings**

Most of the structures at the fort have been treated with historic furnishings. The exhibits can be grouped into two basic categories: furnishings with reproduction items that can be used in elements of the living history program, and furnishings using original period objects that require special care and protection. Some of the existing furnished exhibits need some relatively minor improvements.

Plans are already in place to furnish the North Officer’s Quarters, and the Commanding Officer’s quarters when rehabilitation of both can be completed.

### **Cheyenne/Sioux Indian Village**

The site of the extensive Cheyenne/Sioux Indian village on the Pawnee River may eventually be transferred to the NPS and administered by Fort Larned National Historic Site. The site currently is owned by the park friends group, the Fort Larned Old Guard, and access to the site is only through occasional scheduled guided tours.

### **Publications**

The park bookstore is managed by the Western National Parks Association. While the store is stocked with a wide variety of theme-related items, a number of additional needs have been identified but cannot be accommodated within the space.

A good selection of single topic site bulletins has been developed by park staff; however, a means of displaying them needs to be developed so that visitors can know what is available.

### **Personal Services**

The park’s personal services interpretive program relies heavily on a large cadre of volunteers who perform a wide variety of services. Living history in period clothing is the hallmark of the personal services program. Interpreters in period clothing add an essential human dimension to the historic scene and visitor experience.

Interpretive staff and volunteers offer a wide variety of guided tours, formal and informal talks, demonstrations, and special events.

### **Education Program**

The park desires to expand its current education program and better engage area educators in program development. Currently most visiting school groups (after viewing the visitor center exhibits and AV program) are taken on a

guided tour of the fort by park staff. The park also conducts offsite programs occasionally.

Teachers also can make use of two activity books available from the cooperating association. One focuses on Fort Larned; the other on the Santa Fe Trail.



Commissary

The following is a description of program and media recommendations designed to further define, support, and communicate the park's mission, purpose, significance, interpretive themes and visitor experience goals. Highest priority is focused on improving the basic interpretive and education program. Emphasis is also placed on promoting partnerships and increased visitation to Fort Larned, Santa Fe Trail sites and thematically-related Indian Wars sites. Implementation of these recommendations will help ensure that visitors are well prepared and informed, and that they will be able to develop meaningful connections with tangible and intangible resources.

The discussion of each program or media proposal identifies its purpose, special considerations, and sometimes suggests specific means of presentation. It is important to remember that the latter are only suggestions and should not in any way limit the creativity essential during the media and program planning and design processes. On the other hand, proposals will be specific enough to provide meaningful guidance, develop Class C cost estimates, prepare or update PMIS submissions, and define the parameters within which these creative energies can flow.

At least one of the primary interpretive themes makes direct reference to Plains Indians and their associations with land now in the park. It is essential that the park maintain a dialogue and active participation with tribal leaders during the planning, design, and production of theme-related media and programs.

Although there are some interim recommendations throughout this section of the document, most of the proposals are based on plans to relocate the park entrance and establish a new historically accurate pedestrian approach route to the fort. Two of the primary objectives of this move will be to separate modern media and operations from the historic visitor experience in the core fort area, and to bring visitors into the fort along the Santa Fe Trail.

More specifically this plan would replace the existing parking lot and bridge with a new parking lot and a reconstruction of the original Santa Fe Trail "wagon bridge" in its original location to the west of the fort. This development will bring visitors along the historic alignment of the Trail to the sutlers complex described below (see proposed site plan).

## Information and Orientation

As part of the NPS Centennial Initiative, the park has proposed the development of a multi-agency Western Kansas Heritage Center on I-70 in Hays. This partnership-developed and operated facility would provide information about a number of sites in the area including the Fort Larned and Nicodemus National Historic Sites. The goal would be to provide site information in a stimulating and compelling way to encourage travelers on I-70 to see the value of committing time to visit. Some of the sites could be linked thematically and/or geographically on one or more auto tour routes.

The park will continue to provide information and orientation through traditional means such as answering phone, mail, and email requests. Responses will continue to be



tailored to specific inquiries, and pre-developed packets of material will continue to be used in handling more common requests. All printed information will contain appropriate phone numbers and addresses, including email addresses, and the park web site url. Information packets should contain a detailed map showing how to get to the park from different directions. In most cases, the rack card will likely continue to be substituted for the official park brochure.

Once the new entrance route is established and additional reconstructed buildings added, the official park brochure will need to be revised. In addition to revising the official park brochure, the park-produced site bulletins will be regularly evaluated to determine which items are used most, and which may be obsolete or unnecessary. It is recommended that some or all of the site bulletins be placed on-line so that visitors can download or print them at home or at the park. Likewise, a changeable display of available site bulletins should be located near the information desk so that visitors know what is available.

All materials, including those produced by outside travel entities and park partners, will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that information about the park remains accurate, appropriate, and current. The park staff will work with area partners to encourage coverage of events and programs. Also, local tourism publishers will be encouraged to include appropriate tribal offices in their mailings.

The park Traveler's Information System (TIS) has never functioned adequately. The sound quality has been poor (scratchy or skipping), and often the system has been down completely. It is recommended that

the park either have the necessary repairs made to the system, or remove it altogether. Alternatives such as cell phone and satellite radio technology could be used to instruct travelers to call or tune in for park and other information. This way there is almost no equipment to maintain and the messages can be updated as often as desired.

Since many vehicles now have GPS navigation systems, the park should work with these system providers to ensure that they give accurate the most direct instructions for reaching the park. GPS coordinates could be provided in park brochures and on line.

The park will continue to enhance its web site, especially the in-depth material and links to related and partner sites, in order to reach larger and more diverse audiences. Additional links or references to other, sites, museums, and programs that deal with theme-related elements should be explored and developed. Another link should be established with the NPS National Trail System Office (NTSF) in Santa Fe. Various types of downloadable information should be developed so the people can place material on their IPods, MP3s, CDs, or other devices for use at home, on the road, or when they get to the park.

Other web site improvements include evaluating, reformatting (condensing or compressing) the former virtual tour and reestablishing it as a web site feature. In addition to a basic tour of the fort, other topics, such as "the contents of a soldier's pack, the Santa Fe Trail, Buffalo Soldiers, etc., could be added. Another idea is to record some of the better interpretive programs and interviews with park subject matter experts and give them a home on the web. An online Junior Ranger Program might be part of this emphasis.



Various education program materials also could become an important component of the park's web site. Some things could be downloaded directly, while others might be sold online if appropriate through the cooperating association. Many of these materials would be helpful for educators planning a trip to the park, but they also would benefit home schooled students and those who may never have the opportunity to visit in person.

It is recommended that the park explore the potential of partnering with an area high school and local colleges/universities computer tech class to assist in developing some of these internet recommendations.

Highway signs directing people to the park, as well as the main park entrance sign need to be evaluated in light of current NPS graphic identity guidelines. If the main park entrance is relocated, some of these signs will need to be moved and/or changed anyway, making this a good time to update the sign program. The dramatic, eye-catching, larger-than-life metal silhouette of a mounted 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S. cavalry trooper definitely catches the attention of passing motorists, and it should continue to be part of the entrance experience.

Upon reaching the parking lot, it is suggested that a sign and a display of regimental flags would help assure people that they have indeed arrived. Also at the main parking lot and at the picnic area, visitors should easily find an informational wayside exhibit providing orientation to the park as well as information on key resources, interpretive programs, activities, regulations, safety, etc. These exhibits should probably take the form of a shelter to provide shade for visitors and protection for graphic panels. A portion of each exhibit could incorporate a bulletin case devoted to changeable

information, if staffing levels support. Two of the main goals here are to provide a general orientation to the park and lay out the variety of opportunities available.

After crossing the new wagon bridge, visitors would be standing on the historic Santa Fe Trail. It is recommended that a replica mail coach/stage be placed at this location. It would be interpreted by a wayside exhibit possibly located near the end of the footbridge. From this location, visitors will clearly see the sutler buildings and know that this is the park visitor center. Signs would direct visitors to the sutler store building containing the main lobby and information desk.

Recommendations regarding information and orientation inside the visitor center will be discussed in the following section.

## Visitor Center

Since it will likely be a number of years before the proposed changes to the park entrance and new visitor center are made, this section of the LRIP is divided into short-term and long-term recommendations. The short-term recommendations apply to the current visitor center, involving relatively minor and inexpensive improvements to existing media. The long-term recommendations are for the media in the reconstructed sutler complex.

### Short-Term Recommendations

- Revise the existing slide show and convert it to DVD format. This would involve some re-scripting for accuracy, reshooting the artwork, remixing the soundtrack with a new narrator, ADA-compliant captioning & period music, and the purchase & installation of DVD projection equipment.

- Modify the top-view exhibit cases to make them more ADA compliant.
- Perform minor rehab on exhibits that require it.
- Possibly add 1-2 new exhibits to better organize the overall elements and to provide greater focus on the “people” concept described in primary theme #4.
- Upgrade exhibit room lighting.

### Long-Term Recommendations

When the sutler complex is reconstructed just outside the southwest corner of the fort proper, it would consist of three buildings: the sutler store, mess hall, and sutler’s residence. The exterior of all three buildings would look as they did during the historic period; however, the interiors would be adaptively used for a variety of interpretive functions.

It is beyond the purview of this LRIP to identify specific space utilization for each of the buildings. Final decisions will require, among other things, an analysis of interior spaces, projected visitation, efficient circulation patterns, accessibility, etc. However, this plan will identify the specific interpretive program areas that will be needed in these structures.

Overall objectives for the new visitor center will be to:

- Welcome and introduce visitors to the park.
- Provide the broader thematic context of the fort with respect to the Santa Fe Trail, the postal service, westward migration, and Indian relations.
- Present a focused in depth

perspective of the Plains Indians (particularly Cheyenne and Kiowa because of their dominance in Fort Larned’s region), their relationship to the land and causes of conflict

- Present key interpretive concepts that cannot be easily interpreted through historic furnishings and/or personal services.
- Prepare visitors for entering the historic core that is mostly free of modern media and facilities.
- Show how sutler stores were an important subsidiary element of the fort operations.
- Present the role of the Buffalo Soldiers at Fort Larned and their relationships with other people (soldiers, Plains Indians, Hispanics, etc.) at the fort and perhaps throughout the Plains during the Indian Wars era.
- Visually orient visitors to the entire Santa Fe Trail and related historic sites and in ways promoting visitation throughout the Trail
- Introduce visitors to the uses and purposes of the Santa Fe Trail
- Coordinate or consider exhibits with/at other sites along the Trail to tell the entire story to avoid inducing a feeling of repetition in visitor experience as they (hopefully) go from site to site.

The main building program areas required will include:

- A lobby with a staffed visitor information desk.
- Exhibit area.
- Cooperating association sales area for books and

items related to park interpretive themes.

- AV theater.
- Public Rest Rooms
- Volunteer Support

## Lobby

Information and orientation will continue to be an important function inside the visitor center. On entering the sutler store building, visitors will clearly see a staffed information desk that has a period appearance. The lobby will be large enough to provide a welcome and basic orientation for arriving groups; however, it does not need to be designed to hold visitors for long periods of time.

The current information desk would serve as a model for determining the equipment and functional needs of the new facility: i.e. storage for handouts, telephone, remote start for the AV program, etc. The new desk would be designed to meet ADA standards for both visitors and employees.

A changeable display of available site bulletins and self-guiding trail publications is recommended to be located near the information desk so that visitors know what is available, and can simply ask for copies of items that interest them.

The lobby is the place for welcoming visitors to the park. It is also the place to help people identify what there is to see and do, and to provide assistance in planning their visit. In addition to the fort proper, this is where visitors should learn about the self-guiding trail to the post cemetery and mail station site, the Santa Fe Trail ruts site, the Cheyenne/Sioux Indian Village, Santa Fe Trail Center and other theme-related sites in the area. Any special publications (i.e. trail guides) or AV devices or download stations

should also be readily apparent and available.

The lobby is often a good location for changeable exhibits and displays that provide information about other theme-related sites in the region. The park also has many important items in its collection which could be displayed on a rotating basis.

Items such as a map of the entire Santa Fe Trail can be an introductory graphic to show Fort Larned in an overall context, and if located near the information desk, it can be easily used by park staff for reference or for short introductory talks.

## Exhibits

Maximum effectiveness of exhibits usually depends on having an organizing element that provides continuity. A geographical basis is an effective way of organizing these elements, as it facilitates travelers finding them as they travel; enhancing their ability to follow the Trail corridor, visualize the Indian Nations it crossed and locate the other sites. Such a geographical treatment would greatly enhance understanding of how the natural environment affected life on the SFT. In short, a geographical approach could help people visualize the layers of interconnectedness among elements of peoples, nearby features (sutler complex as a place of cultural exchange, Cheyenne/Sioux Indian Village and detached ruts) the SFT corridor, rivers, general terrain, and other natural features, Indian nations, etc.

Since the interpretive experience in the core area of the fort will focus on living history and historically furnished areas, the visitor center will be a key location to develop electronic or other modern interactive exhibits that will appeal

to children and communicate elements of the primary interpretive themes. Various ideas could be inexpensively tested with visiting children or school groups and later developed by a professional exhibit designer. This, of course does not preclude the development of low-tech interactive elements using period items in the core area of the fort.

The exhibit experience, and the overall fort experience for that matter, should inspire visitors to want to learn more. A concluding series of exhibits at the visitor center could present other related sites to visit, interesting web sites to explore, and key publications available. Visitors should definitely be made aware of the nearby Santa Fe Trail Center, and the bookstore would be the logical first stop for obtaining related publications.

The Cheyenne/Sioux Village site will need be to be introduced at the visitor center. It would highlight American Indian links to the Fort Larned story and let people know about the preservation and future interpretive opportunities at the village site. The development of this exhibit concept will provide a special opportunity for the park to strengthen ties with the respective tribes, and to broaden the diversity of the visitor experience.

### **Bookstore**

The cooperating association bookstore will be an important element of the new sutler store visitor center. It will be located near the information desk so that park staff can handle sales and maintain visual security. The design of the bookstore will communicate elements of the historic sutler store, and some interpretive messages would be integrated into the display.

Given the changes in the primary interpretive themes, the cooperating

association should conduct a new scope of sales study. This process evaluates each sales item with regard to price, intended audiences, and interpretive theme(s) addressed. The study will identify areas of strength as well as areas that could be the focus of a publications program.

Specific recommendations made during the development of this LRIP include taking some of the NPS-produced histories and research studies regarding Fort Larned and reproducing them for sale. Another suggestion is to develop a more in-depth publication on the Cheyenne/Sioux Indian Village.

The cooperating association needs to make some of its key theme-related publications available for purchase online. This will benefit people planning a visit to the park, as well as people who may never be able to come in person. It can also be a vehicle for getting educational materials (i.e. the Dave Webb Adventure books) into the hands of teachers, including those who may never be able to bring their students to the park.

### **Theater**

A portion of one of the sutler buildings would be designed as an AV theater for showing a new introductory video program. It is recommended that a high definition, 5.1 historical immersion interpretive video be produced that introduces the historical context, the physical layout, and the human heritage represented by Fort Larned during the Indian Wars period. The video would introduce the significance and purpose of the fort, and portray its relationship to a diversity of people and points of view...soldiers, officers, Buffalo Soldiers, American Indians, merchants & sutlers, Indian agents, teamsters, and the variety of people traveling the Santa Fe Trail. The process of moving the mail and



concepts such as manifest destiny, trade, communication, conflict, etc. also could be illustrated.

The program would provide a provocative portrait of a poignant nexus of lives and destinies on the isolated Kansas prairie and along the Santa Fe Trail. Based on diaries and personal accounts, these stories can come alive for today's visitors and prepare them to step back in time to visit the core fort area.

The new film will target a general audience, but it also will appeal to children and make the historical events easy to understand. It is recommended that a 28-30 minute film be produced, but it would be edited to a 12-15 minute version for showing in the theater. The park would have all duplication rights, and the longer film would be available for sale in the bookstore and for television broadcast. In addition, a 2-3 minute version could be edited for internet web streaming. Perhaps as a component of the park's education program, the film could be made available to school groups so that they can view it prior to their visit.

New AV equipment in the theater will ensure the best projection for the film, along with a quality surround-sound system with captioning, and audio description.

The space developed for the theater should provide seating for a minimum of 50-55 people or multiples thereof. This will accommodate a full bus group in one sitting, and avoid the need to divide school and other bus groups to view the program. The historical character of the selected building will likely require a flat floor and moveable seating. Screen size, projection length, and acoustics also will need to be factored into the theater design. Harpers Ferry Center

can be consulted for assistance on these and other issues.

## Outdoor Media

Fort Larned National Historic Site needs far fewer wayside exhibits than most NPS historic sites in the West because much of the actual fort compound still exists in pristine condition. Here there is no need to help people imagine the past via images and text on waysides, because those views are still there for visitors to experience directly. Placement of modern wayside exhibits in this historic setting would only detract from the experience; consequently no wayside exhibits are proposed within the historic core of the fort quadrangle.

A wayside exhibit proposal is recommended to address areas outside the fort proper. This would include approach routes, trails, detached sites, and areas where historic resources have been lost or are hard to see. The proposal would assess all existing and proposed wayside exhibits and identify which key park stories would link strongly with a particular view or place in the landscape. The resulting document would become the foundation for creating all informational and interpretive wayside exhibits in a logical and orderly way. The proposal also would point out places or stories that do not fit well with the capabilities and capacities of wayside interpretation.

One basic recommendation is that all current waysides would be removed from the historic core of the fort. However, all of the current waysides will be evaluated to insure that their messages are communicated somewhere else via other media. Actually, all of the non-standard wayside exhibits in the park should be removed and all new waysides designed using current NPS graphic identity standards.

New informational wayside exhibits were recommended earlier in the Information and Orientation section. An interpretive wayside also was proposed near the new wagon bridge, as visitors step onto the Santa Fe Trail and view the proposed mail coach wayside. This exhibit would identify the Trail, diverse people associated with it and enable visitors to easily understand its connection to the fort.

Outdoor media on the History/Nature Trail could effectively interpret non-extant structures and natural history. This includes a post cemetery (bodies reinterred at another military post), landforms, plant identification, Plains Indian plant uses and influence of nature on the humans. Formal/standard wayside exhibits are not recommended for the cemetery. Instead, it is suggested that 66 period wooden grave markers be reproduced and placed in the ground at the cemetery to depict the graves. Each marker could bear the

name, unit and other information commonly on grave markers of the period. Additional information such as cause of death could be on “back” side. Consideration should also be given to reproducing the monument (the original is in the maintenance yard) and placing it in the cemetery as well. This would clearly show visitors where the cemetery was located, its size, and on closer examination people would learn more about the fort’s diversity and that the actual graves were moved. Coupled with a self-guiding trail text or audio, visitors would get an even more in-depth experience here.

Another location along the self-guiding (history/nature) interpretive trail potentially suitable for a wayside exhibit is the former mail station site. Situated at the far end of the oxbow, it is definitely not a part of the core fort experience. The current shade shelter at the site gives people a sense of arrival. A wayside at this location will help to interpret the station and tie it to the fort.



Santa Fe Trail Rust  
Observation Tower

Consider placing a wayside near the mail station about Hancock and Custer meeting with Plains Indians, the same people Custer would meet in 1876 in the Little Big Horn valley. Refer to the History/Nature Trail section for more recommendations related to outdoor media.

As a short term recommendation prior to relocating the park entrance, the fee kiosk could be adapted as an open-sided shelter to provide arrival information.

The following is a summary list of some of the wayside exhibit concepts proposed during the development of this LRIP. We recommend a list of waysides with the caveat that it will be further refined in the Waysides Plan. I would like to be able to use *both* the LRIP and the Waysides Exhibit Plan as partial justification in any additional PMIS submissions for funding waysides.

Wherever arriving visitors will be getting out of their cars for the first time, they immediately need site orientation (*What to See and Do*); these sites are also the NPS's first opportunity to convey our corporate identity. Fort Larned needs basic site orientation in two places to help arriving visitors decide to walk the trail and cross the bridge into the historic core.

- Picnic Grounds Kiosk
  - What to see and do
  - Santa Fe Trail
  - People of Fort Larned
- Main Visitor Parking
  - What to see and do
  - Santa Fe Trail
  - People of Fort Larned

New site-specific interpretive waysides that could be developed over the next 10 years without compromising the unspoiled viewsheds of the historic fort core include:

- Main Visitor Parking
  - The Mail Arrives (Links fort's original function with Trail)
- Pawnee River Bridge
  - Where's the Stockade?
- Santa Fe Trail Ruts
  - The Wide Road to Santa Fe
  - What is a Rut?
  - Prairie Dog Town
- History/Nature Trail
  - Grave Markers
  - Plants/Natural History

#### Future Potential Waysides at Cheyenne/Sioux Indian Village

The waysides listed below would provide orientation and site-specific interpretation on lands that are presently not federally owned and managed. If the Indian Village site comes under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service during the lifespan of this Long-Range Interpretive Plan, waysides like these could be a good option to enhance the experience visitors will have.

#### Orientation Waysides

- Parking
  - Fort Larned orientation
  - Indians and Santa Fe Trail

#### Site-Specific Interpretive Waysides

- Pawnee Fork Indian Village
  - Uneasy Neighbors
  - U.S. Army Point of View
  - Cheyenne Point of View
  - A Fine Winter Camp
  - Iron Kettles & Lodges
  - Custer's Mission

As proposed in the Visitor Center section of this LRIP, the potential of using cell phone or podcast technology for conveying the interpretive messages and sound effects at the village site should be explored. These technologies have potential for use both indoors and

outdoors as a self-guiding audio tour where they can add considerable depth to the interpretation.

Since the actual technology is evolving so rapidly, any specific media recommendations made here will almost certainly be obsolete in a few years. However, the concept would be that visitors could use their own cell phones or iPods, Mp3 players, or other devices to call or download the messages, and then use them in any order they choose. Information could be downloaded from the park web site from people's homes, or at a designated download station in the visitor center.

Today over 54 million Americans have impaired vision, impaired hearing or mobility problems — roughly one person in five. Of that number, 10 million potential visitors to NPS sites are “legally blind” and 7.7 million see so poorly as to have difficulty reading a newspaper. The National Park Service is therefore now obligated to look for ways that the messages and services we used to deliver only by visual media, like waysides, can be offered to visitors who see poorly or not at all.

Unlike historic sites in more remote places, Fort Larned has good cellular phone coverage. Any visitor with a cell phone in hand could get the audio messages from a voice-mail server while looking at any wayside exhibit site. In 2006 Valley Forge NHP pioneered the way to use existing voicemail technology to provide audio interpretation free of charge to visitors with great success.

In the past, many NPS historic sites have used audio message repeaters with external speakers to add to the interpretive effectiveness of their waysides. These units are notorious for breaking down; many attract lightning strikes; and, they infringe on visitor sovereignty. When school

groups are on a trail, the old-style audio speaker station will be triggered over and over. The quality of the visitor experience for those people present on the trail who are not part of the school group suffers, because the latter have no choice as to whether they want to hear the audio message or not.

For people who do not have a cell phone, programs exist (such as the Pioneers of America) where used phones can be reprogrammed to call only a specific number, which in this case would be the park number containing the AV tour messages. These phones can be acquired very inexpensively and could be loaned to visitors who need them. All of these message devices can be offered in multiple languages and easily changed. They also can be used to provide audio description for visitors with sight impairments. And, the park can even keep track of the number of times a specific site is called, how long a people listen, etc.

### **History/Nature Trail**

The history nature trail needs a new pamphlet updated to the Unigrd format and/or electronic interpretive media. If electronic is used, it would facilitate conveying more information in a more evocative format by coupling narratives and/or “overheard conversations” with period sounds such as passing wagons and troops, teamsters, etc. Improved form(s) of markers identifying plants, their uses, etc. should be considered for the history/nature trail. Cell phone or similar technology would also increase the opportunity for visitors to make meaningful connections with the natural resources. The trail also provides a means of discovering the Plains Indians through their utilization of natural resources. Linking nature and the tribes that actually dominated the area before and during the historic



period provides another way of understanding the earlier peoples who lived here, including land use patterns and resultant conflicts.

Accessibility for special populations needs consideration; a mixture of visual and audio technology would satisfy the needs of visitors with limited vision and hearing. Consideration should also be given to the trail surface and how it is maintained in relation to mobility challenged visitors. Perhaps (a) special “all-terrain” wheelchair(s) could be obtained for such visitors.

## Historic Furnishings

Historic furnishings at Fort Larned fall into two basic categories:

1. Rooms furnished almost exclusively with modern reproductions of period items. These spaces are designed for use by living history interpreters and volunteers, and visitors can directly interact with many items.

2. Rooms furnished with historic museum quality objects, some of which may be items originally at the fort during the historic period. Many of these items are fragile, rare, and expensive to replace. These spaces are not meant to be used by park staff or visitors.

Due to the sensitivity of the period rooms furnished with sensitive or original pieces (#2 above) it is recommended that full barriers continue to be used for security and to offer some degree of climate control. It also is recommended that the plexiglass panels (which have become scratched over time) be replaced with laminated glass. Partial barriers can be used with the rooms furnished with reproduction period items, and they can be removed when employees are present.

Prior to the onset of this LRIP, decisions had been made to furnish the North Officers’ Quarters and the Commanding Officer’s Quarters. Work on the North Officers’ Quarters is slated to begin in 2008. Plans are to basically follow the same format used with the South quarters in that some rooms will be furnished with historic museum quality objects and others with period reproductions.

In the Commanding Officer’s Quarters, it is proposed that the front parlor, dining room, and possibly the Commanding Officer’s bedroom on the first floor be furnished. At least the parlor would be furnished with reproduction period pieces to enable the room to be used for living history interpretive programs and guided tours. It also is suggested that Hancock’s and Custer’s visiting cards be reproduced to reinforce for visitors that these two prominent figures were actually in this parlor.

When the current visitor center operation relocates to the sutler complex, some or all of the vacated space could be furnished as the barracks for Company D. However, since this is one of the few climate controlled buildings at the fort, the options of using some of the space as a classroom for the education program and/or for special events should be considered. The public rest rooms will remain.

The stables should be reconstructed. The building would be used as a stable during living history events. Since the stable (like the sutler complex) lies outside the core fort quadrangle, it will be further evaluated in the development of the wayside exhibit proposal.

Some relatively minor improvements to existing furnished spaces include:



Post Doctor's Office  
Operating Room

- Increasing the volume of staples such as flour sacks to better depict the amount that would have actually been on hand historically.
- Increasing the number of ammunition boxes to better represent the amount that would have been on hand historically.
- Improving Lt. Philip Reade's quarters by displaying the photo from Fort Dodge that guided the furnishings here.
- Developing period window displays in the unfurnished portion (utilities room) of the Commissary building to give the illusion from the outside that the space is furnished.

In addition to excluding wayside exhibits from the core fort area, all other modern signs located inside or outside the furnished buildings should also be removed. Most agree that the ultimate way to experience the fort would be to provide personal services guided tours year round. This, however, may not be achievable during the life of this LRIP and some visitors may still prefer to explore the site on their

own terms and at their own pace. In this regard, it is recommended that printed matter and several AV/ experiential technologies be used to enhance the fort experience and add the diverse human dimension. The official park brochure can function as a very basic self-guiding tour publication. The artwork depicting the current buildings is supported by direct labeling and a single paragraph of text. The artwork will need to be updated as additional structures are added to the historic scene. In addition, it is recommended that a more in-depth publication be developed, perhaps in a 19<sup>th</sup> century post newspaper format. This would be prominently displayed in the visitor center lobby. It could be offered free of charge, or at a minimal fee to help cover the cost of printing.

Supplementing the printed material, it is recommended that an audio tour be developed that could be used in a number of different formats: cell phone, tape, MP3, Ipod, etc. In most all cases visitors supply their own hardware and the park supplies phone number(s) or means to download the messages. The Fort Larned staff wants to avoid

high tech options that would isolate visitors from their surroundings and from each other; thus, devices requiring full headsets will not be developed for the general public, but possibly for hearing impaired visitors.

In some cases soundscapes could be developed for use in various furnished spaces. These could be activated by hidden infrared sensors when people enter the space. The goal would be to provide some of the actual sounds, snatches of conversations, accents, etc. that one might hear, instead of a “narrator” describing the space. In addition to sound, technology now exists to add different smells to a furnished room experience. These too could be activated when visitors enter specific areas. In all cases these mechanisms should be easy to turn off at any time, especially during guided tours or living history events.

Perhaps the most important sounds at a military post are the bugle calls. These should definitely continue to be an integral part of the Fort Larned experience, either by electronic means, or by actual buglers during living history events. A new timer is needed, and consideration should be given to adding some of the voice commands that would have been heard at different time of the day.

## **Cheyenne/Sioux Indian Village**

During the life of this LRIP, it the Cheyenne/Sioux Indian Village site on the Pawnee River may be officially transferred to Fort Larned National Historic Site. Some discussion and recommendations regarding this site have been presented in the Information & Orientation and Visitor Center sections of this document.

For the near term interpretation of the site will only be possible

through publications, exhibits and AV media at Fort Larned, and periodic guided tours. This is likely to continue until the site is acquired and a staff presence is established. The current lodge poles at the site, add a strong visual reference and it is recommended that they remain.

In anticipation of the site’s eventual opening to more visitors, the parkwide wayside exhibit proposal will include recommendations for a series of waysides for the village site. Historic images and possibly new artwork associated with these exhibits will give visitors a feel for the size of the village, the clear demarcation between the Cheyenne and Sioux sections, and the military force that destroyed it.

While guided caravan tours from Fort Larned to the village site are not seen as a practical or safe, a special NPS or contractor-provided van tour or self-guided audio (cell phone) tour should be explored. Both options could identify and interpret key features and landmarks along the route, and provide more in-depth interpretation at the site itself. Acquisition of the “Confrontation Hill” site, or scenic easement with waysides should be considered.

The development of the interpretive story and media at the village site also presents an excellent opportunity to actively involve the Cheyenne and Sioux people. This, if in fact, will be essential to ensure that the interpretation is accurate in content, that multiple perspectives are presented, and that the tribes feel a sense of ownership and stewardship regarding the site.

## **Education Program**

The park wants to move beyond the standard ranger-guided tour for visiting school groups; however, future growth of the park education





Burning of Cheyenne/Sioux Village

program is primarily contingent on having an education specialist (see Staffing section). This would allow the park to:

- Develop and implement a park education plan.
- Develop and expand the number of curriculum-based programs to address specific grades and topics, as a minimum, where park interpretive themes and Kansas history benchmark standards “intersect”.
- Reach broader audiences, including those that may not be able to visit in person.
- Provide education materials on-line.
- Increase the number of visits to and from schools.
- Continue and/or expand teacher training workshops to enable schools to make the best use of park resources and pre and post-visit materials.
- Create better communication and coordination with other organizations (i.e. the Santa Fe Trail Center) that interpret similar resources and themes.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of individual activities and overall program.

With a strong program that ties directly to local, state, and national curriculum standards, more schools will see the value of using the park to help meet their needs, and to justify a trip to the park. This can be accomplished by involving educators directly in the development of both general and specific activities and curriculum guides. It also is recommended that the park and its partners work with school district consortiums and at the state level for help in increasing the audience base and for development of activities and materials with statewide applications. Partnering program development and workshops with the Kansas State Department of Education, Santa Fe Trail Association, Kansas State Historical Society and similar organizations will promote the development and use of the education program.

Teacher training workshops can be structured to provide participants with the basics for getting involved with the park education program,



but they can accomplish much more. Teachers can receive training for conducting most activities themselves, thus minimizing the on-site time required by park staff. Workshops can be conducted with park partners and structured so that participants can receive in-service or academic credit. Some workshops can be recorded on video for remote telecasting. Still other workshops can utilize teacher expertise to develop curriculum-based materials that meet specific academic standards. And, even students can be involved in workshops to evaluate the effectiveness of current or proposed education activities.

Education materials developed for the in-park program may also have value for home-schooled students and groups that may never be able to visit in person. Many of these materials could be placed on the park web site. Some items could be offered as free downloads; other materials could be offered for sale on-site or on-line through the cooperating association, or offered free to those who participate in teacher workshops.

One possibility might include development of an “edukit” that

combines educational resources (reproduction items, images, records, oral histories, virtual tour, etc.).

Specific items already developed for school include the *Fort Larned Adventures* and the *Santa Fe Trail Adventures* activity books by Dave Webb. Both books are currently sold in the cooperating association bookstore. They should be reevaluated in light of new and established Kansas curriculum standards so that they can continue to be an important and useful element of the park’s education program.

The park and park partner sites with theme-related resources should work together to explore how each can develop educational goals and programs to meet the needs of different educational groups. This will prevent duplication of effort and capitalize on each site’s strengths. If marketed as a package to educators, it will make it easier for teachers to select programs and sites that best address different curriculum goals and standards. The Santa Fe Trail Center has offered to help in applying for funds through challenge cost-share and other sources.



Bakery

The idea of working with an area high school computer tech class (mentioned in the Information & Orientation section) to implement some of the web-based recommendations, can also be viewed as an aspect of the park's education program. Although students would be focusing primarily on the technological process of web site development, they also will need to become familiar with the subject matter and park resources.

Student inmates at the nearby correctional institution have helped the park by building a reproduction of the fort guard shack, and the park has, in turn, given interpretive programs for the students. This relationship should definitely continue, and ways to further increase participation should be explored. This could be partially accomplished through web access to park education programs and materials, and education-based personal services activities at the institution.

As the education program continues to grow, the park will need to look into a better location for conducting indoor activities, workshops, etc. Since most education groups visit during the shoulder seasons (spring and fall), having a climate controlled space will be preferred. A portion of the space vacated by the relocation of the visitor center could meet these education program needs.

## **Audio Visual Enhancement**

Audiovisual related recommendations have been integrated in numerous sections of this LRIP. For example: web site proposals can be found in the Information & Orientation and Education Program sections; a new primary park film is described in the Visitor Center/Theater section; audio tour options can be found in

the Outdoor Interpretation section; and, soundscapes, aromas, etc. are outlined in the Historic Furnishings section. The reader is directed to these specific sections for more information regarding these AV recommendations.

## **Personal Services**

A variety of personal services programs and activities will continue to be an essential component of the overall interpretive program for Fort Larned National Historic Site. These activities will have the unparalleled advantage of being inspiring, versatile, alive, and tailored to the needs of individuals and groups. An interpretive presence also helps with the protection of fragile resources. Interpreters, whether behind an information desk, roving, leading a tour, giving a talk, or conducting a demonstration, are the best interactive tool in enabling visitors to experience, understand, appreciate, and make personal and intellectual connections with resources.

The park will continue providing living history programs, interpretive talks on theme-related topics, roving interpretation, and a variety of special events. Even a small thing, like engaging visitors at Retreat to assist with the flag lowering is a simple but memorable experience with significant interpretive value.

Volunteers will continue to be a large and critical part of the interpretive staff, and it is recommended that the program be expanded. Interpreters in period clothing need to be part of the historic scene and visitor experience, especially in the core fort area. An archive of material used in the development of different roles also should be prepared and maintained. This will build a strong foundation for new and current interpreters and help insure that valuable intellectual history is retained.

It is recommended that various types of immersion (i.e. day-long or overnight) experiences be developed for visitors.

For the present, personal services will remain the only way for visitors to experience the Cheyenne/Sioux Indian Village site. If staffing permits, these guided tours should be scheduled on a more regular basis, especially after the installation of the new exhibits in the sutler complex visitor center. There also is the potential for developing a one-time, periodic, or annual special events involving representatives from the tribes.

Since personal services interpretive programs are relatively easy to change, the activities should be evaluated on a regular basis to discontinue those that are not effective, modify and improve those that require it, and validate those that are successful.

### **Partnership Opportunities**

Continued and expanded partnerships with others throughout the region will remain a crucial and integral part of the overall interpretive program at Fort Larned National Historic Site. Specific partnership related recommendations for this LRIP are:

- Continue working with key partners in promoting the planning and development of a Western Kansas Heritage facility in Hays on I-70.
- Develop informational exhibits (with appropriate brochures) at partner sites to inform visitors of the existing theme-related network and to encourage them to visit other sites in the area. These exhibits also would let people know what primary themes and resources are represented at the various sites.
- Continue to maintain close relations with tribal offices, Santa Fe Trail Center, NPS National Trails Office in Santa Fe, Santa Fe Trail Association and its individual chapters (Wet/Dry Route). And, expand relations with Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas State Historical Society, State parks, similarly themed parks and many more.
- Continue the practice of encouraging park staff to volunteer in the community.
- Explore opportunities to develop a network of education programs that present easy to use format for teachers to select activities and sites that best meet their needs.
- Maintain connections with other area attractions and service providers to share information and ideas for continually improving the overall visitor experience, and to ensure that everyone has access to accurate and current information.
- Work with popular media (i.e. History Channel, Discovery Channel, PBS, etc. to promote the development of programs on the Santa Fe Trail and Fort Larned, and Western forts in general.
- Via the Internet and other means, engage national and even world-wide historical associations and living history groups in a cooperative exchange of information and activities encouraging tourism and special events.
- Explore the potential of becoming part of the Heritage Byway system.

## Special Populations

Provisions will be made to accommodate the needs of special populations who visit Fort Larned National Historic Site. Special populations are identified as those with sight, hearing, learning, and mobility impairments; visitors who do not speak English; and the elderly and young children.

Public Law 90-480, the Architectural Barriers Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 establish standards for physical access. Other regulations, laws, and standards include Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Director's Orders No. 42, and the Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities in National Park Service Programs, Facilities, and Services. All newly constructed facilities, as a matter of course, will be designed for accessibility for physically disabled visitors and employees. A study to identify barriers and recommend corrections is currently being negotiated with the "National Center for Accessibility"; this study will be used in completing interpretive planning.

Every effort will be made to provide full access to interpretive media and programs to ensure that people with physical and mental disabilities, as well as people who do not speak or understand English, have access to the same information necessary for a safe and meaningful visit to Fort Larned National Historic Site. All new interpretive media will follow the standards for accessibility as described in the NPS, October 2007 Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media. These guidelines can be found on the Harpers Ferry Center web site at: <http://www.nps.gov/hfc/pdf/accessibility/access-guide-oct2007.pdf>.

Informational and interpretive media in the visitor center will include some audio components which will appeal to broad learning styles, and will offer added accessibility for those with visual impairments. This will include audio description of the exhibit experience. Tactile elements should be used wherever they will enrich the experience for all, and where they may be essential for accessibility.

## Staffing Needs

### Staffing

Fort Larned National Historic Site experiences year-round interpretive needs consisting of personal and non-personal services on- and off-site. Interpreters are needed to:

- Staff the visitor center year-round.
- Present competent conducted tours, talks, and demonstrations.
- Provide interpretive skill training for interpreters, other park divisions, other parks, affiliated sites, and employees of partners and cooperators.
- Staff historic structures as appropriate to provide living history interpretation.
- Compose, review, etc. 106 compliance documents to support park restoration, facilities maintenance and similar.
- Manage, continuously improve and promote use of the park's curriculum-based education program
- Write, edit, design, and produce park publications.
- Write, edit, design, and produce indoor and outdoor exhibits.
- Develop, design, manage, and maintain the park's website and interactive information computers
- Manage the park's volunteer program.



- Provide liaison with Maintenance Division for accurately interpreting cultural resource subject matter and current research findings.
- Manage and maintain the park's museum collections in accordance with NPS standards (including ANCS) and meeting GPRA goals.
- Manage and maintain the park collections which include: a library, photographs, historic photographs, digital images, slides, and archives.
- Manage and maintain the park's audiovisual equipment.
- Coordinate special events and initiatives on and off-site.
- Meet media needs through reviewing articles and publications, on-site tours and talks, interviews and composing and disseminating news releases to provide communities and special interest groups with current park news.
- Provide scheduled tours for school groups and similar organizations and offer/provide tours for others.
- As a fully integrated "Interpretation, Education and Visitor Services Division"; this staffing plan reflects the full range of division responsibilities and the relationship of interpretation/ education to supporting resources management, related research, emergency services and multitude of other activities conducted under these programs. We also keep in mind how these other programs and activities "feed back" into providing information useful for providing the best interpretation and education services for park audiences.

To meet these identified needs, and to implement the recommendations

in this long-range interpretive plan, a recommended staffing plan includes:

- Chief Ranger
  - Oversees parkwide interpretation, education and information services. Partners with KS State Department of Education, KS State Historical Society, school districts, home schools, Santa Fe Trail Association (and its chapters) and related to provide education and interpretation services.
  - Long-range planning.
  - Member of park's management team.
  - Coordinate Special Events.
  - Liaison with local tourism, cultural heritage and business organizations to promote visitation to local area cultural and natural heritage sites.
  - Oversees park natural resource management program and NEPA compliance.
  - Coordinates all emergency services, structural fire and related security and emergency response programs. Partners with local, state and federal agencies to meet program requirements.
  - Oversees cultural and natural resources management programs including preservation, Section 106 compliance, integrated pest management, prescribed fire, grasslands management, resources inventory and monitoring. Provides liaison/ coordination with Kansas State Historical Society, Midwest Regional Office, Southern Plains Inventory and Monitoring Network, US Fish & Wildlife Service, universities and similar to

- perform these activities.
- Develops and delivers interpretive presentations on park programs described above to accomplish related park goals.
- Supervisory Park Ranger (Operations Leader)
  - Maintain all daily operations.
  - Provide interpretive training, coaching, mentoring, and evaluation.
  - Assure effective implementation of Interpretive Development Program and interpretive certification/competencies program.
  - Provide/initiate Section 106 compliance review.
  - Develops and presents interpretive programs related to park resources and issues.
- Park Ranger (Permanent Full Time)
  - Develops and presents interpretive programs.
  - Manages park volunteer program (250+)
  - Supervises information desk/visitor services.
- Park Ranger (Permanent Full Time)
  - Writer/Editor: reviews/rewrites existing published materials about the park; develop new park publications; write text for exhibits; manage park website and interactive computer programs.
  - curriculum-based education coordinator.
  - Manages and coordinates park's education programs.
  - Develops and presents interpretive programs.
- Park Ranger (Permanent Full Time)
  - Develops and presents interpretive programs.
- Cultural resource management and research liaison.
- Manages and coordinates park collections.
- Maintains and monitors park museum collections. This includes regular scheduled inventories, monitoring and curatorial treatment.
- Operates ANCS program.
- Park Ranger (Permanent Full Time)
  - Develops and presents interpretive programs focusing on natural resources to support park management objectives and education programs.
  - Conducts, oversees and coordinates natural resource management program including vegetation and animal communities (NEPA, IPM, prairie restoration, prescribed fire, prairie dogs and inventory and monitoring and related).
  - Liaisons with park partners including US Fish & Wildlife, Southern Plains I&M Network, Midwest Regional Office, universities and similar entities to coordinate/achieve natural resource management activities.
- Park Guide (Permanent Full-Time)
  - Provides orientation information for visitors at Visitor Center.
  - Presents interpretive programs on and off-site.
  - Provides tours and roving interpretation for protection of park resources.
  - Staff living history attended stations in and around historic structures.
- (4) Park Guides (Temporary Full-Time)

- Provides orientation information for visitors at Visitor Center.
- Presents interpretive programs on and off-site.
- Provides tours and roving interpretation for protection of park resources.
- Staffs living history attended stations in and around historic structures.

## Training

In addition to on-going training in interpretive skills and knowledge of the resources, park interpreters and others who deal with the visiting public need to keep abreast of current research, technologies, programs, and activities. By working across operational division lines, effective and efficient ways to alert and/or involve staff in new or on-going projects can be explored. All interpreters will actively participate in the Interpretive Development Program (IDP), obtaining certification for their full-performance level.

The park also will continue to explore opportunities to offer interpretive skills and resource training to non-NPS folks who engage in interpretive activities. Training could be offered through scheduled courses, workshops, etc. Potential trainees include Santa Fe Trail Association chapters, schoolteachers (especially workshops for curriculum-based education programs, cooperating employees, interagency staffs, and others in the region and local communities who offer interpretive and informational services. Training also will be offered to all volunteers, researchers, interns, and employees in other divisions.

## Research Needs

Park interpretive staff needs to continue working closely with resource management staff to keep

up to date on research activities and results. Resource management specialists should be encouraged to present regular briefings on projects to the entire park staff, including interpreters. Agency and contracted researchers also should be encouraged or instructed to produce executive summaries and programs that translate research results into layman terms for park staff and the public.

A Visitor Services Project Study that will be conducted in Fiscal Year 2009 will answer important questions related to park visitors and visitor trends. These questions include: Who visits? What are their motivations, expectations, and satisfaction levels? By what means (highway signs, internet, publications, etc.) do they become aware of the park and its location? Is the length of stay sufficient for conveying park interpretive themes, purpose, and significance to visitors? Who doesn't visit and why? How do visitors and visitor experiences compare to other theme-related sites? Are there new services or media devices that would enhance visitor understanding and satisfaction? Are there more effective ways of increasing visitation? How do answers to these and other questions vary from season to season?

Research also is important in the development of specific media and programs and will be planned as part of all substantial media projects and specialized programming. This should definitely be a part of the visitor center redesign project. Front-end evaluations would query potential visitors before products and activities are developed. This type of research is targeted so that practical use can be made of the results. Formative evaluations would be conducted during conceptual design, and would test inexpensive

mock-ups of interpretive media and programs before fully investing in final products. Summative evaluations are valuable in helping to determine the effectiveness of final media, facilities, and programs

– i.e. whether the intended themes are being communicated, if people actually make use of the information, or if visitor behavior is affected.



Guard Shack and Blockhouse



# SUMMARIES

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## Summary of Products and Actions

The following is a summation of the action items and products proposed in this long-range interpretive plan. Each of these items is described in greater detail in the narrative sections of this document. This list is designed to help develop the implementation schedule, annual and long-term priorities, assignment of responsibilities, and cost estimates.

It must be emphasized that the following list deals specifically with actions and products for media and programs related directly to information, orientation, interpretation, and education. Although new and redesigned facilities are proposed or referenced, recommendations related to these projects will be developed through other planning and design efforts. Staffing requirements to implement and maintain the following actions are identified in the Staffing section.

### Parkwide

- Develop & implement parkwide wayside exhibit proposal.
- Develop electronic messaging system for download to visitor-owned devices.
- Develop audio tour or fort site.

### Information and Orientation

- Evaluate directional sign system
- Review/update information produced in-house & by external sources (ongoing).
- Enhance/expand park web site and links with park partners, especially those with similar themes. (ongoing).

- Establish on-line cooperating association sales.
- Evaluate official park brochure (ongoing).
- Evaluate TIS.
- Acquire repro mail coach.

### Visitor Center

#### Short Term (current facility)

- Revise existing slide show & convert to DVD format.
- Modify top-view exhibit cases for better access.
- Rehab other exhibits as needed.
- Upgrade exhibit room lighting.

#### Long Term (new facility)

- Produce new primary AV program.
- Design new AV theater.
- Acquire new AV equipment for theater.
- Design new information desk.
- Design/produce new exhibits for lobby and exhibit area.
- Design new bookstore using sutler store motif.
- Develop changeable display of park site bulletins.
- Establish changeable/temporary exhibit area.
- Develop new interactive exhibits elements for children.
- Conduct front-end, formative, and summative evaluations of media.
- Conduct cooperating association scope of sales study.

### Outdoor Media

- See Parkwide for development of portion of wayside exhibit proposal.

- Restore post cemetery markers.
- Revise self-guiding trail publication.
- Develop audio tour of Cheyenne/Sioux Indian Village.
- See Parkwide for development of audio tour or fort site.

### **Historic Furnishings**

- Complete furnishings for North Officer's Quarters.
- Complete furnishings for Commanding Officer's Quarters.
- Furnish portion of former visitor center space as barracks.
- Equip reconstructed stable for use by living history program.
- Increase volume of staples in Commissary.
- Develop period window displays at Commissary.
- Increase volume of ammunition in armory.
- Evaluate addition of an Animotron to Lt. Reade's quarters.
- Add (if/where appropriate) electronic sensory elements to rooms.
- Continue bugle calls; upgrade equipment.
- See Parkwide for development of audio tour or fort site.

### **Cheyenne/Sioux Village Site (pending acquisition)**

- See Outdoor Media for development of audio tour.
- See Parkwide for development of portion of wayside exhibit proposal.
- Increase number of guided tours.
- Explore potential of establishing a special event in partnership with tribes.

### **Education Program**

- Explore indoor location options for education program space.
- Develop and expand the number of curriculum-based programs.
- Reproduce AV programs in DVD format for use in schools, etc.
- Provide education materials on-line.
- Increase the number of visits to schools.
- Expand teacher training workshops.
- Explore opportunities with partners to share education program activities.
- Develop education plan.

### **Personal Services**

- Continue/expand number and variety of personal services activities & programs.
- Continue/expand programs that demonstrate cultural diversity of site's history.
- Continue/expand number and variety of theme-related special events.
- Explore potential of day-long or overnight immersion experiences.
- Evaluate effectiveness of all programs (ongoing).

### **Partnership Opportunities**

- Assist in development of Western Kansas Heritage Center in Hays.
- Develop networking informational exhibits at partner sites.
- Establish and maintain active web site links with key organizations.
- Maintain and strengthen relations with associated American Indian tribes and others (ongoing).
- Explore potential to develop education program network.

- Explore partnership with area high school computer tech class.

## Implementation Plan

### Interpretive Media and Program Action Items

The following lists the action items recommended in this long-range interpretive plan for Fort Larned National Historic Site. While the list does identify new or redesigned structures and media, it does not include many details of development like mechanical systems, security systems, rest rooms, offices, storage areas, workrooms, parking lots, and road/trail development. These details, plus all new/restored structures and furnishings (e.g. seating, information desks, and sales displays) will be included in Denver Service Center, Regional Office, cooperating association, or contractor specifications.

Implementation of the recommendations in this long-range interpretive plan will be phased over the next 10 years, and many will require independent planning and design efforts. Other action items can be implemented immediately, within existing funds and staffing levels.

Changes in staffing, funding, and other unforeseen circumstances can alter priorities, especially when they are long-range or contain a lot of specific detail. Consequently, the following list shows only general phasing priorities. Specific descriptions/components of each item can be found in the Implementation Strategies section of this document. The following list serves as a guide in developing the annual work program components of the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan.

Action items are:

## Short Term (1-3 years)

### Complete Comprehensive Interpretation Plan

Update permanent interpretive exhibits for Visitor Center to current standards

Conduct publications survey and develop park publications plan

Revise and reprint park unigrid brochure

Complete development of parkwide wayside exhibit plan and obtain funding for production and installation

Expand number and variety of personal services programs

Develop partnership with Kansas State University for interpreter internship programs

Upgrade or remove Traveler Information Station (TIS) on K156

Partner with selected CVBs to promote regional natural/cultural heritage tourism to increase visitation at park and nearby cultural/natural heritage sites/centers

Complete detailed furnishings plan for North Officers Quarters

Complete and present curriculum-based education programs

Initiate installation of accessible surfaces and removal of barriers to mobility-challenged visitors

Develop and install a new audiovisual orientation program meeting accessibility standards.

Partner with Santa Fe Trail Association to develop and deploy education program traveling trunks

**Medium Term (4-6 years)**

Develop uniform design for parkwide literature and marketing materials

Partner with Santa Fe Trail Association and NPS Trails Office to develop a trail-length information system to promote tourism to SFT sites

Complete Implementation of Waysides Exhibits Plan

Partner with Cheyenne and Kiowa leaders to develop Plains Indian interpretation program

Partner with nearby school districts, universities and inventory and monitoring network staff to make Fort Larned NHS as an outdoor laboratory for natural resources studies

**Long Term (7-10 years)**

Restore the historic wagon bridge to its original location

Develop collaborative self-guiding interpretive tour plan (to include audio/accessibility components)

Acquire and develop space for education facility

Develop integrated and expanded education program(s)

Create a position dedicated mainly to education programs

Restore the Sutler's Complex of residence, store and mess as a means of interpreting the rich cultural diversity of Fort Larned as one of the "crossroads of cultures" on the Santa Fe Trail

Develop permanent information/orientation exhibits/services at Sutler's Complex

Develop and deploy a tactile

topographical model of Fort Larned for visually-challenged visitors

Develop and implement self-guided tour(s) using cell phone or other personal messaging systems

**Planning Team and Consultants**

**Fort Larned National Historic Site**

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George Elmore, Park Ranger/Historian  
Tony Cyphers, Park Ranger  
Celeste Dixon, Park Ranger  
Betsy Crawford-Gore, Administrative Officer  
Rusti Gardner, Administrative Support Clerk  
William Chapman, Facility Manager

**Park Partners and Consultants**

Ruth Olson Peters, Director, Santa Fe Trail Center  
Bev Howell, Education Director & Exhibit Designer, Santa Fe Trail Center  
Dave Webb, Kansas Heritage Center  
Joanne VanCoevern, President, Santa Fe Trail Association  
David Clapsaddle, President of the Wet/Dry Routes Chapter of SFTA  
Vicki Gillett, Larned Tourism Committee  
Jim Simpson, Principal, Westside School  
Stephanie Bauer, Teacher, Larned Middle School  
Marla Matkin, Volunteer  
Dr. Leo Oliva, Historian/Author

**Harpers Ferry Center**

Mark Johnson, Wayside Exhibit Planner  
Tim Radford, AV Producer  
Michael Lacome, Exhibit Designer  
Paul Lee, Interpretive Planner





Blacksmith Shop