

FORT UNION





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PLEASE—

As you walk through the past, think also of the future.

Help us protect the ruins; they are extremely fragile despite our efforts at preservation.

Here, rabbits and rattlesnakes have equal roles, for there is no good or bad in nature. Observe but do not destroy the delicate balance.

FORT UNION TRAIL

As you visit Fort Union, try not to think of it as the film-maker's typical stockaded post, its tiny garrison besieged by screaming Indians. Certainly, that happened, but seldom, and not here. The western forts were not defensive works. They were an offensive weapon, a base of operations from which the soldier rode forth to meet his enemy. Hence, Fort Union had no wall built around it, and it was never attacked. Keep this in mind as you inspect the facilities of Fort Union, the largest Southwestern military installation in the 19th Century.

FIRST FORT UNION — 1851 Audio station. This is followed by an exhibit at the

SECOND FORT UNION — 1861 A true fort, it was designed for defense, but not against Indians — against Confederates.

THIRD FORT UNION — 1864-1891 Audio station.

Signs and exhibits not listed in this trail guide are placed along the path and in

buildings for your information. The photographs are positioned as near as possible to where the photographer stood. Feel free to walk over to any feature or exhibit that interests you.

POST COMMANDER'S HOME Rank has its privileges, and for the commanding officer this meant an eight-room house with a cellar in the walled back yard. When covered with stretched canvas and suitably decorated, the center hallway made a perfect dancing floor, according to one woman. Walk through the rooms and imagine how it would have been to have this house to yourself compared to the other smaller officer's quarters which were shared by two officers and their families.

ENTERING THE FORT UNION DEPOT As supply trains arrived from the north over the Santa Fe Trail the tons of material necessary to an Army were unloaded, stored, repacked, and ultimately shipped to other southwestern forts. In addition to the military assigned here, hundreds of civilians were also employed. During February, 1868, for example, 396 men in a variety of professions were paid a total of \$18,047 each month.

QUARTERMASTER OFFICER'S QUARTERS Although the Quartermaster commanded only this portion of the fort, the Depot, he was responsible for all of the construction. Thus, the Depot was built first, and then the Post. His was also the finest residence at Fort Union — walk around and inspect it. Notice especially the workmanship in the foundation stones; the arched fireplaces; and, in the rear, the brick cellar, patio, and sidewalk leading to the privy.

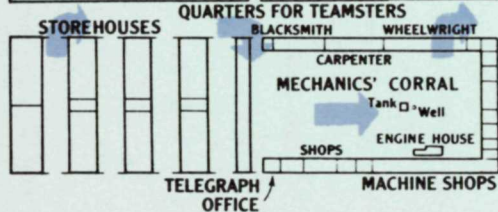
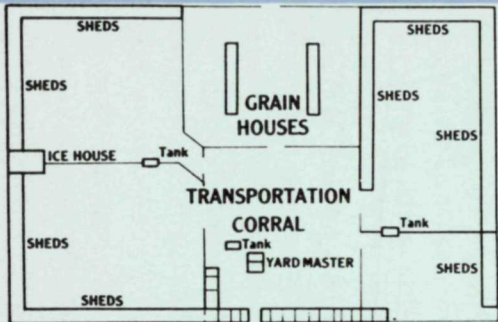
Here, too, you have a good example of the adobe wall that enclosed three sides of the back yards along Officer's Row, affording privacy and a place to plant tomatoes where the mules wouldn't step on them.

PARADE GROUND Note the heavier stones in a portion of the walk here; a road ran east and west across the parade ground. Notice also that the south half of the Depot parade ground was fenced from wagon traffic and is a foot or so higher.

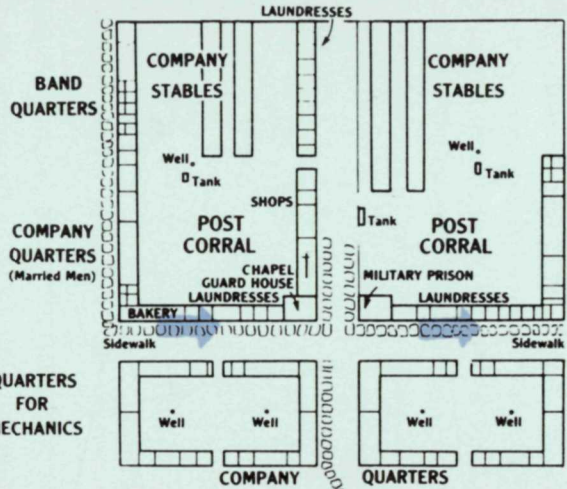
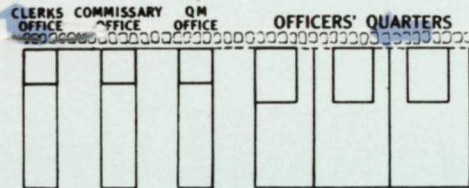
Yes, please do examine artifacts along the trail. And, then, of course, put them back so that those who follow you may also discover them.

SANTA FE TRAIL This roadway to New Mexico was, for sixty-some years, the main link between the Territory and the States. It was primarily a freight route although travelers came over it, too. Many of the loads carried were bound for Fort Union. Commercial goods went on to Santa Fe. Originating from points in Missouri, the 800-mile trail to Santa Fe split into two major routes. One, the Cimarron Cut-off, angled southwest from Fort Dodge, Kansas, and was short but dangerous. The other, which went west into Colorado before turning south and entering New Mexico, was called the Mountain Branch. They joined into one route again near Watrous, eight miles south of here. If you wish, you may walk a portion of the trail north from here for about half a mile.

COMMISSARY STOREHOUSE Hungry? If you had been a soldier here a hundred years ago with a little change in your pockets, you could

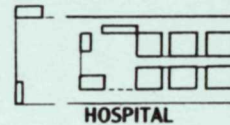
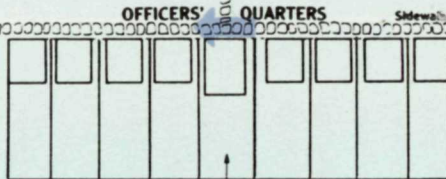


FORT UNION DEPOT

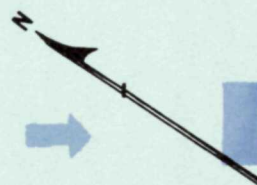


POST OF FORT UNION

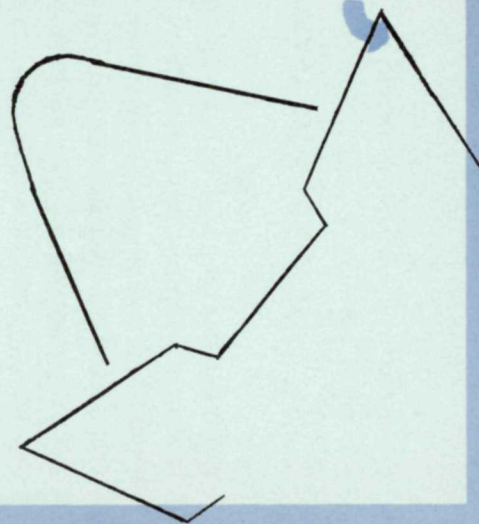
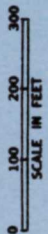
Flagstaff



COMPANY QUARTERS (Married Men)



PLAN OF
FORT UNION
1877



have purchased some canned fruit or imported crackers or most any other delicacy you wanted. The large basement held perishable goods such as bacon and potatoes: The other four warehouses held all sorts of supplies — clothing, building materials, tools — everything needed by the soldiers. Most of it had been freighted in from the States. The large wagons pulled in between the warehouses to unload. Many of the supplies would later be reloaded into wagons bound for other posts in the Southwest. At night, the large wooden gates at the ends of the buildings were locked. Bars on the windows and a posted guard kept the goods safe — usually.

SERVICE AREA Here were the necessary supporting installations of the Post. Privies, the Post Bakery, married enlisted men's quarters, laundresses' quarters, corrals, and the like. To the right were the company barracks. In the center of the second barracks is an exhibit; please walk over to it if you wish. Bakery—the oven was rebuilt in this location in 1877. From the individual flour raton, soft bread was baked daily and issued to the men of the companies. To be a laundress at Fort Union, a woman was required to be lawfully married to a soldier. A private in the Indian Wars Army was paid \$13 a month, and if he were married, his wife almost had to work in order to help support the family. Laundress, hospital matron, officer's servant, school teacher, postmistress — these were a few of the careers available. By comparison, the base pay for an Infantry captain in 1870 was \$1,800 a year.

GUARDHOUSE, CHAPEL, PRISON Guards were posted throughout Fort Union with much

formal ceremony, in charge of the prisoners by day and as protection against theft and fire at night. Here, too, time for minor punishments was served. The military prison was for hard cases: murderers, deserters, and others, civilian as well as military. What you see is the cell block itself, once surrounded by an adobe building with one entrance on the north side. Each of the ten cells had a wooden or steel door; one has been reconstructed. Prisoners, unless in solitary confinement, were worked from dawn to dusk, usually in irons. Often two or more would be crowded into each cell, sleeping on straw mats on the cold floor. One of the last buildings constructed in the third fort, the prison, was finished in June, 1868. About ten days later, the first escape occurred; two men got away in the night and haven't been heard from since. This was a chaplain post with a resident Protestant chaplain who held services each Sunday, and once a month a priest would visit the fort to hold Mass. The chaplain was also the treasurer of the Post fund and was in charge of the Post school.

POST HOSPITAL Six wards, 36 beds and a maximum capacity of 60 or more; a surgeon and assistant surgeon with an additional staff of about 8 — this made the hospital one of the finest in the West. Then, as now, medicine was on the verge of exciting new discoveries. Lister's germ theory was coming into acceptance; smallpox was the only vaccine, but more were just around the corner; quarantine, rest, cleanliness and fresh air were major weapons against disease. Soliders and their families received free care; civilians had to pay about fifty cents a day for their board.

**YOU MAY KEEP THIS BOOKLET FOR
TEN CENTS, OR RETURN IT AT THE
VISITOR CENTER.**

Thanks for stopping. Please encourage your friends to visit the largest pioneer fort in the Southwest.

Information on other points of interest in the vicinity may be obtained from the ranger in the Visitor Center.



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