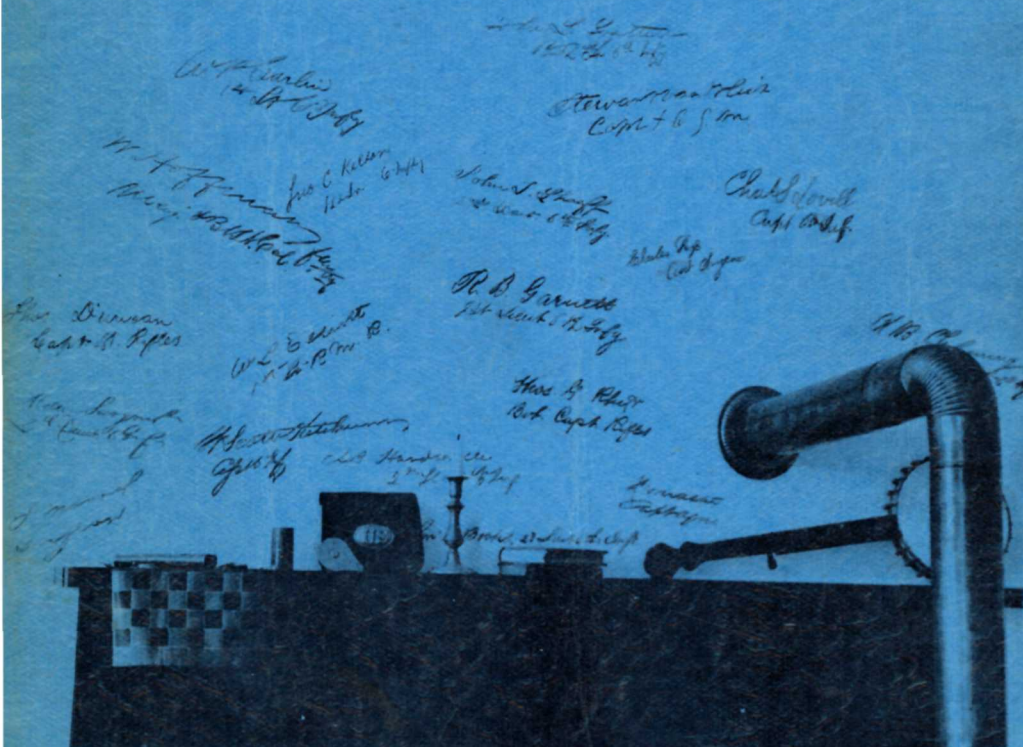


# Fort Laramie's Historic Buildings

## an Illustrated Guide



Prepared as a public service by the Fort Laramie Historical Association

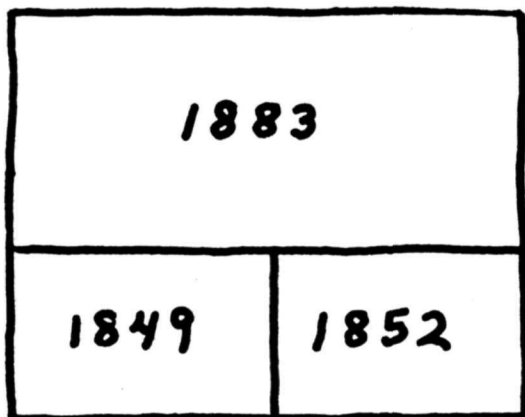
**You may use this booklet free and return it to the information desk. If you wish to keep it, the price is 25c.**

The Fort Laramie Historical Association is a non-profit corporation which works in cooperation with the National Park Service at Fort Laramie National Historic Site. The Association maintains a large sales stock of appropriate books, pamphlets, colored slides and postcards at the Visitor Center in the old Commissary Storehouse. The net proceeds of these sales are devoted in accordance with the organization's charter, to support of research and interpretive activities at Fort Laramie National Historic Site.



### THE POST TRADER'S STORE

The post trader (known as a sutler before 1868) was a civilian licensed to do business on the military reservation. His store supplied a wide range of general merchandise to travelers and residents of the region, in addition to luxury goods not handled by the army's Commissary of Subsistence.



The trader's store at Fort Laramie is made up of three sections, built at different dates. Earliest is the adobe portion, dating from 1849. A stone addition came in 1852, and the rear portion of the building is a lime-concrete structure, built in 1883.

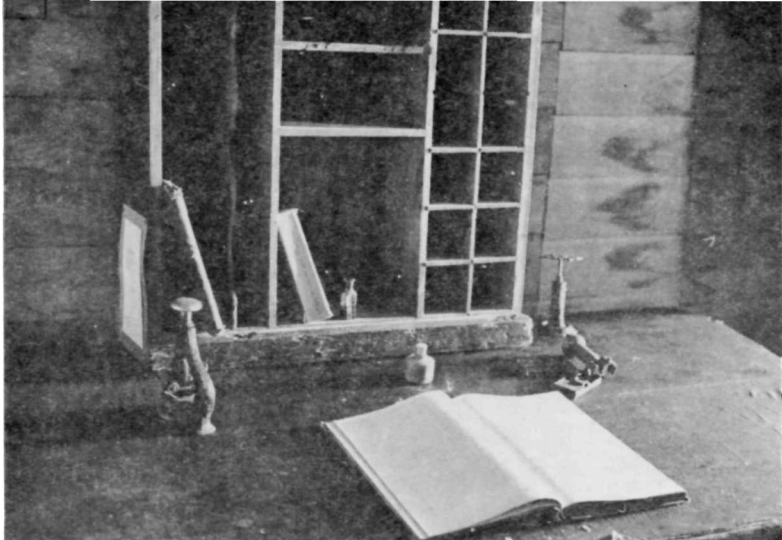




The store proper, in the adobe unit of the building, is refurnished to represent its appearance in the year 1876. This year at the peak of the campaigns against the northern plains tribes and at the height of the Black Hills Gold Rush brought large numbers of soldiers, officers, and civilian travelers to the post. To serve them, the trader stocked a wide variety of merchandise, ranging from the tools and weapons of the frontiersman to clothing and household goods for officers' wives and families.



The trader's office, occupying part of the stone addition, appears as it did in 1883. From this compact headquarters, the trader and his staff managed not only the store, but a far-flung commercial domain, including a hotel nearby, a subsidiary store in the mining town of Fairbank (near present day Guernsey), a large ranch, and other enterprises.



The 1883 post office shares space in the stone addition. At this time, the U. S. postmaster for Fort Laramie was also a business associate of the post trader.



Occupying one end of the lime-concrete addition and one end of the stone structure is the enlisted men's bar. Actually an open saloon that served civilian travelers and residents as well, the bar was perhaps the most profitable business of the trader. It served only beer and wine to enlisted men, but did a thriving business after each of the year's six paydays.



In one end of the lime-concrete addition is the 1883 Officer's Club. A club in name only, this bar was run by the post trader, with admission limited to officers, their wives, a few high-ranking civilian employees and their guests. Here, the trader served a wide range of drinks, such as bottled beer, draft beer, whisky, champagne, ale, brandy and wines.



Adjacent to the bar of the Officer's Club is a billiard and card room open to the same persons as the bar.

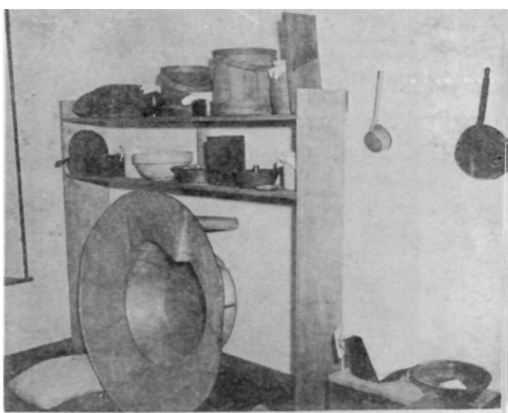
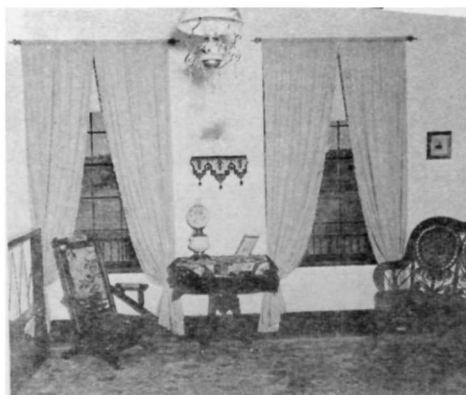


### THE LIEUTENANT-COLONEL'S QUARTERS

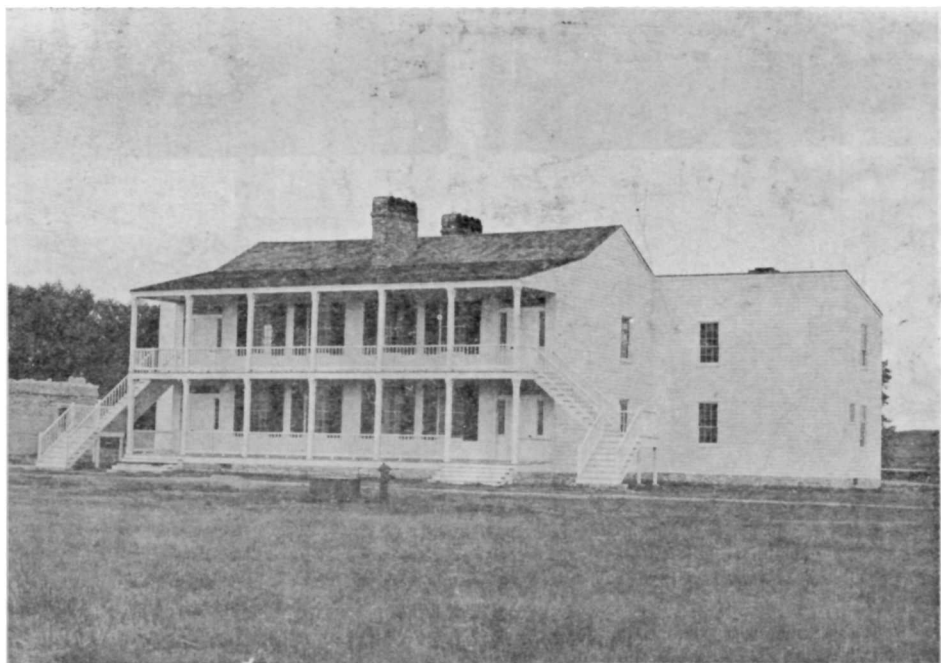
This 1884 quarters represents the last and best type of officer quarters used here. It is furnished to its appearance in 1887, when occupied by the family of Lt. Col. Andrew S. Burt. A son, General Reynolds Burt, and other Burt heirs have taken a deep interest in this structure, contributing many family items to its furnishings.

A lieutenant-colonel ranked quite high in the small army of 1887. His pay (typically about \$4,000. per year) permitted a mode of life in keeping with this status. Good transportation was now available through most of the west, with a railway but forty miles from Fort Laramie. Many army families furnished their quarters in the typically Victorian manner. This quarters is less ornately furnished than most, in deference to the Burts' more conservative tastes and diverse cultural interests.



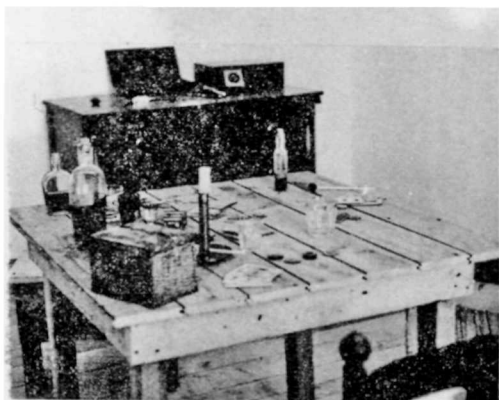
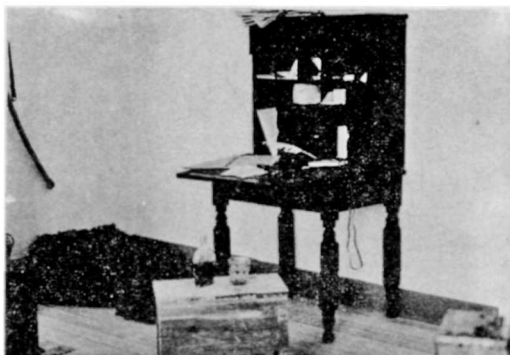
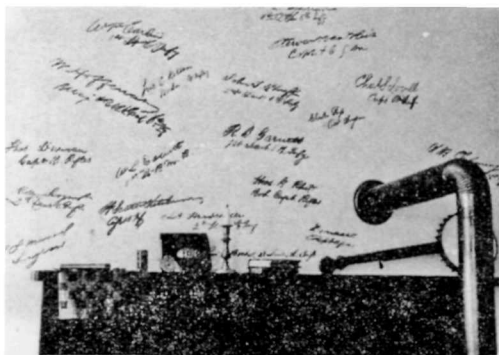






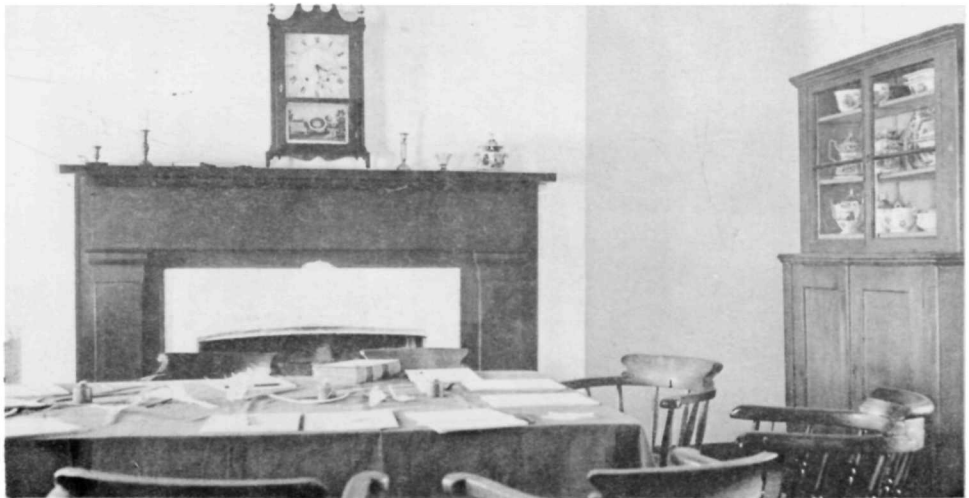
### "OLD BEDLAM"

The oldest standing military structure in Wyoming, this four unit apartment building dates from 1849. The army and later owners made many alterations in its appearance, but it is now restored as it looked from 1852 to 1868. Intended as officer quarters, it served many functions. Sometimes part of its space served as offices, sometimes as family quarters, and often as bachelor officer quarters. Each refurnished unit is done to represent a particularly interesting stage in the building's history.



### A BACHELOR OFFICERS' APARTMENT

Furnished to the period of 1855, this unit of "Old Bedlam" housed three commissioned officers and their enlisted striker. The senior officer used the front room, two other officers shared the rear room, and their enlisted striker occupied a small room off the kitchen. In this era all furniture not made at the post or salvaged from the cast-offs of passing wagon-trains had to be hauled from the Missouri River ports at high cost by wagon-freight. Thus a large number of portable and primitive furnishings are shown here.

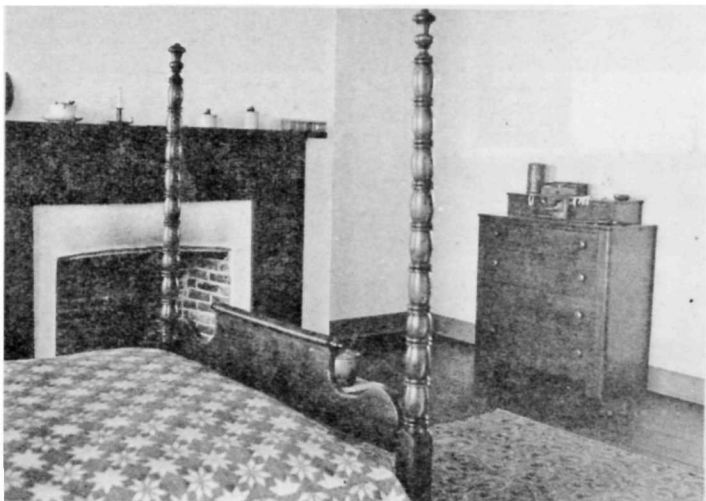


### THE 1864 POST HEADQUARTERS

For many years, one of the first floor apartments of "Old Bedlam" served as post headquarters. This apartment is now refurnished as headquarters in 1864.

At the front is the office of the post commander, and behind it a multi-purpose room, used for board meetings, court-martials and officers' classes, and at this time as the dining room for a cooperative officers' mess.

In 1864, Fort Laramie's garrison consisted of volunteer units such as made up the bulk of the Civil War army. The principal unit here was the 11th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William O. Collins, who also served as post commander.



### THE POST COMMANDER'S APARTMENT

In 1864, Lt. Col. Collins and his wife occupied the apartment above the headquarters. Their quarters consisted of a parlor, bedroom, and a laundry room on this floor. Their kitchen was on the first floor to better serve the cooperative officers' mess managed by Mrs. Collins. The Colonel's striker lived in a room in the first floor kitchen wing.

Conditions at Fort Laramie were much improved by 1864, but the same high transportation costs prevailed. This 1864-1868 era was remembered by army wives as one of hardship sharply contrasting with the ease and refinement of eastern garrison posts.





### A DOUBLE OFFICERS' QUARTERS

This frame building was completed in 1868. Intended as a single post commander's quarters, it was partitioned into a set of two quarters. One unit of this building is now refurnished as a typical captain's quarters of 1872.



### THE CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

1872 stands at mid-point in the relatively peaceful 1868-1876 period on the northern plains. With the coming of the railroad to Cheyenne in 1867, transportation costs were reduced sharply. The general improvement in conditions led many officers to bring their families out to live with them.

A captain, with typically \$2,000. or more pay in that year was reasonably well-off. Years of separation from his family during and just after the Civil War, often meant that their household was just becoming settled and reestablished in this period. Thus the 1872 quarters stands midway between the primitive bachelor quarters of the 1850's and the plush homes of the 1880's.

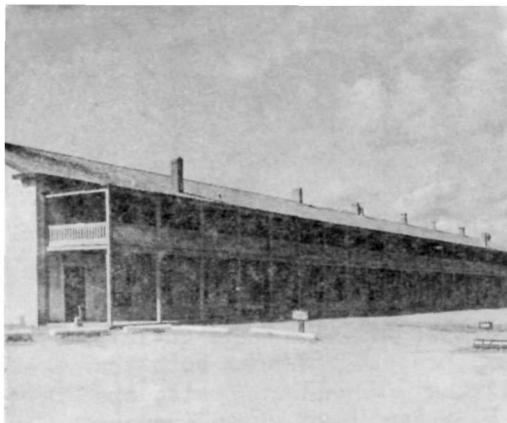


The northwest unit of the double quarters is refurnished as the Post Surgeon's family quarters of 1880. The quality and variety of furnishings items present reflects both the improved general standard of living at western posts, and the typical furnishings chosen by a family of above-average means for the locale and period.



This study served both as an office and as a center for many of the official and personal interests of the Post Surgeon. In addition to his medical duties, the Post Surgeon was officially charged with the keeping of weather records for the post, with the collection and preparation of scientific specimens of a wide variety, and with supplying information on request to such institutions as the Army Medical Museum and the Smithsonian Institution.

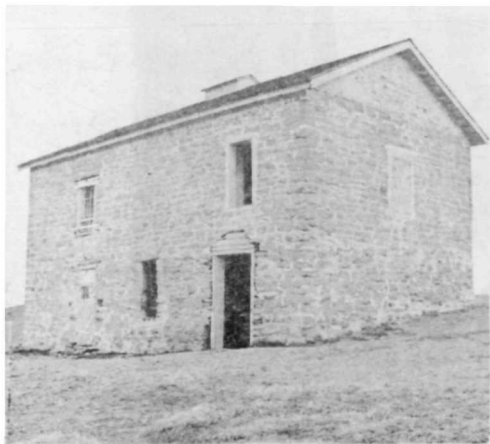
OTHER BUILDINGS TO BE REFURNISHED



1874 Cavalry Barracks



1875 Double Quarters



1866 Guard House



Magazine



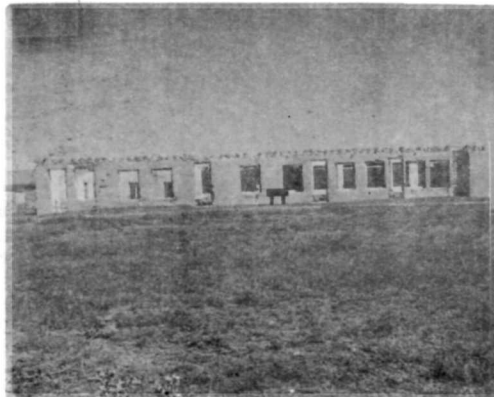


A Bakery

STANDING RUINS, WITH STABILIZATION UNDER WAY OR PLANNED:



1880's Officers' Quarters



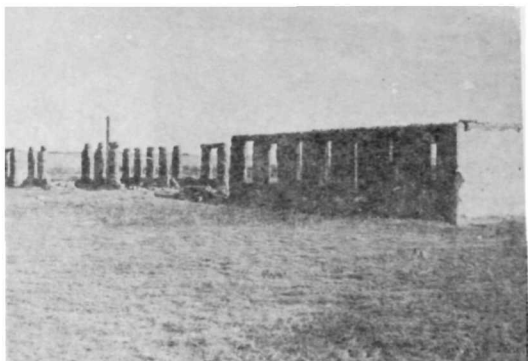
Administration Building



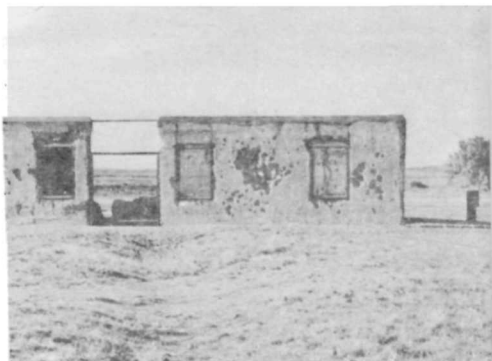
1876 Guard House



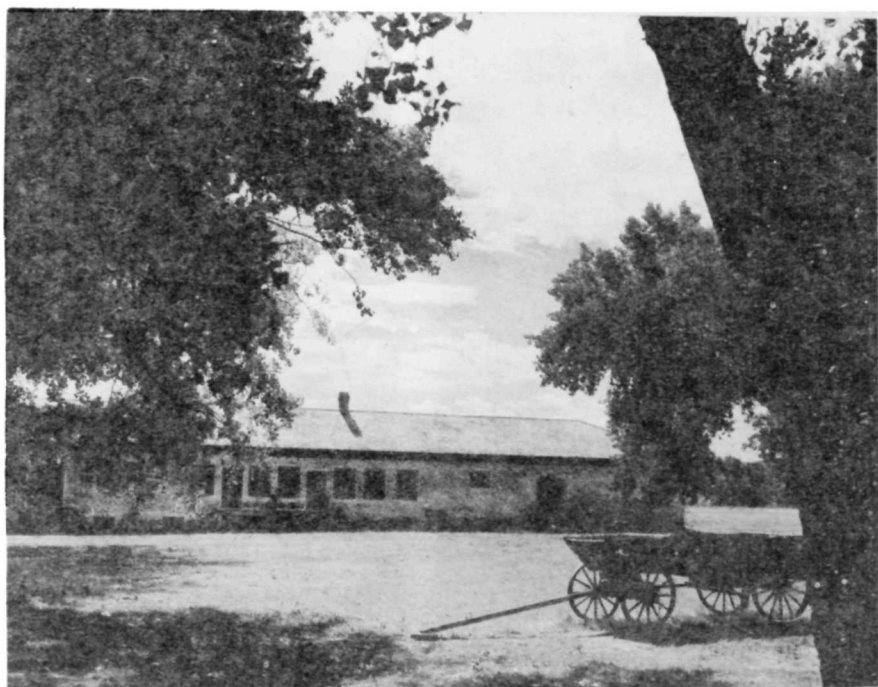
1873 Post Hospital



Sergeants' Family Quarters

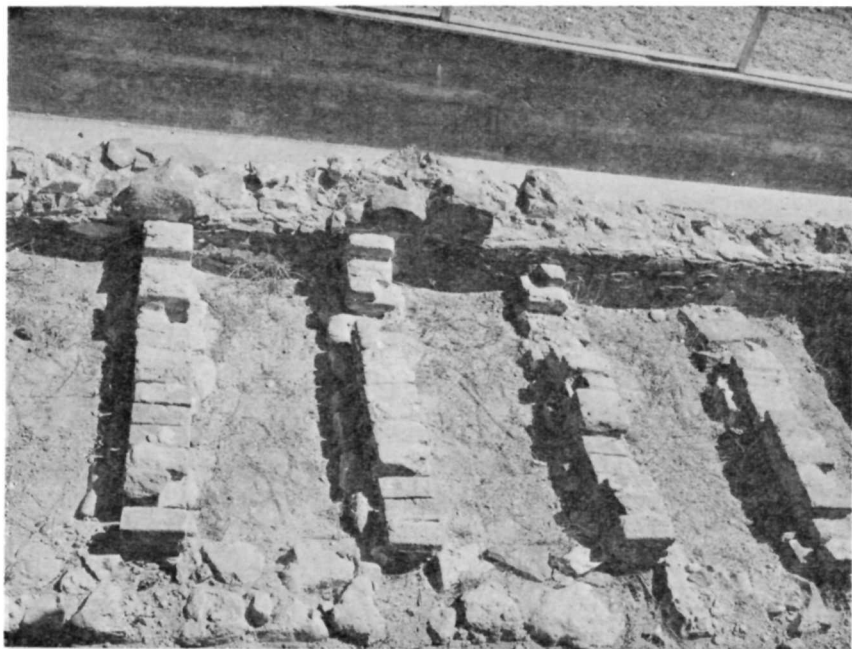


Sawmill



1883 Commissary Storehouse, now a temporary visitor center.

AND MANY INTERESTING FOUNDATION RUINS:



MEANINGS OF SOME PRESENTLY UNCOMMON WORDS USED IN THIS BOOKLET:

double quarters - a building with apartments for two families, or what we today would call a duplex.

lime-concrete - a mixture of lime, sand and water, poured into forms to harden. This construction material is somewhat stronger than adobe, but much less strong than modern portland-cement-concrete.

officers' mess - at this period, officers' rations were issued as unprepared commodities. Usually a group of officers would pool their rations, supplement them with purchased items, and hire a civilian or enlisted man to cook for them. Sometimes a married officer's wife would supervise the procurement and preparation of food when the cook was unskilled.

striker - an enlisted man who served as an officer's servant for extra pay.

sutler - a term used before 1868 for a person who had a permit to retail general merchandise to a regiment or an army post. Sutlers were replaced by post traders in 1868, when the army centralized the appointment of all traders.



SOME GOOD BOOKS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

Fort Laramie, Hafen and Young, Arthur H. Clark Company  
Old Forts in the Northwest, Major Herbert Hart, Superior Press  
Great Day in the West, Kent Ruth, Oklahoma University Press  
Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay, Don Rickey, Jr., Oklahoma University Press

Indians, Infants and Infantry, Merrill J. Mattes, Old West Publishing Company

The Sioux, Royal B. Hassrick, Oklahoma University Press

Last Days of the Sioux Nation, Robert M. Utley, Yale University Press

Following the Indian Wars, Oliver Knight, Oklahoma University Press

The Fur Trade, Paul C. Phillips, Oklahoma University Press

The Plainsmen of the Yellowstone, Mark H. Brown, G. P. Putman's Sons

Indians of the Plains, Robert Lowie, American Museum of Natural History

Portrait of the Old West, Harold McCracken, McGraw-Hill

Army Exploration in the American West, William H. Goetzmann, Yale University Press

The Road to Oregon, W. J. Ghent, Arthur H. Clark Company

When Grass Was King, Maurice Frink, and others, University of Colorado Press

This booklet is dedicated to Mrs. Charles S. Hill, of Denver, whose substantial donations in memory of her late husband have made the refurnishing project possible, and to the many citizens who have given objects for use in the refurnished structures.

