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RICHARD DALZELL GAMBLE

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GARRISON LIFE AT FRONTIER MILITARY POSTS, 1830-1860

APPROVED BY

W. E. Hallor

Acquisitions

V. A. Elouin

S. R. Tompkins

Donald J. Beuthong

THESIS COMMITTEE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. FRONTIER MILITARY POLICY, 1830-1860.....	1
II. THE MILITARY CAREER.....	35
III. THE PHYSICAL PLANT.....	76
IV. THE POST GARDEN.....	108
V. CIVILIAN PERSONNEL AND GARRISON LIFE.....	141
VI. LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES.....	182
VII. RELIGION AND EDUCATION.....	229
VIII. HEALTH.....	280
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	343

## GARRISON LIFE AT FRONTIER MILITARY POSTS, 1830-1960

### CHAPTER I

#### FRONTIER MILITARY POLICY, 1830-1860

A survey of the general attitudes of the United States government toward its military establishment must necessarily preface a consideration of frontier military policy between 1830 and 1860. There were few statesmen and military leaders of this period who did not hold or express a definite view of some sort on military affairs. Few could be judged as unbiased, however. The views of Sir Richard Burton, on the other hand, represent a more objective approach than might have been expressed by an American. Burton visited the United States in 1860 as a climax to an extensive tour throughout the British Empire and to many European countries during previous years. In comparing Anglo-American and French military philosophies, he wrote:

The English and Anglo-Americans, essentially a commercial and naval people, dislike the red coat; they look upon, and from the first have looked upon, a standing army as a necessary nuisance; they ever listen open-eared to projects for cutting and curtail- ing army expenditures; and when they have weakened their forces by a manner of atrophy, they expect them to do more than their duty, and if they cannot command suc- cess, abuse them.

On the other hand, Burton viewed France as a "purely military nation" which pampered its army to raise it to peak performance, whether it succeeded or not.<sup>1</sup>

Military policy, then, was not lacking, but was rather negative in practice. A small standing army was maintained as a "necessary nuisance" throughout the period of 1830 to 1860 and was increased only when a war was actually in progress, viz. the Black Hawk War, the Seminole campaigns, and the War with Mexico. The regular army was increased only slightly in these instances, but was complemented when state militia units were pressed into federal service for short terms of active duty. The militia system, the backbone of American military policy, was singularly defective on account of the closely guarded individuality of states' rights. While the President was authorized to call upon state militia units to augment federal forces, the training and supplying of state units were the responsibilities of the respective states. As in Colonial and Revolutionary War times, the effectiveness and efficiency of militia units usually depended upon the geographical proximity of real or supposed threats to local security. Between 1830 and 1860 those states adjacent to Canada, the Mississippi River, and Florida periodically experienced or sensed such

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Burton, The City of Saints (New York, 1860), 44.

dangers. Other states rested upon the security of distance<sup>2</sup> in order to economize on military appropriations.

After the hysteria of 1812-1815 had abated, the regular army was reduced by 1821 from about 12,600 to 6,100 officers and men.<sup>3</sup> No important structural changes occurred until 1833 when a dragoon regiment was authorized, thus increasing the army's strength to approximately 7,000 officers and men. The formal inclusion of a cavalry unit resulted from the dispersing of troops during the Black Hawk War, when a volunteer mounted ranger battalion was used with some success in pursuing hostile Indian forces. Moreover, the First Regiment of Dragoons was spawned by a tight-fisted Congress which reckoned that the cost of operating a regular army mounted regiment would be one half the cost formerly expended on a volunteer mounted unit.<sup>4</sup> After 1833 the size of the regular army increased by fits and starts as aftermaths of the Seminole and Mexican Wars. The army entered the former affair in 1836 with a strength of 7,100, but emerged in 1841 with an authorized strength of 12,540 officers and men.<sup>5</sup> At the outbreak of war with Mexico in

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<sup>2</sup> Richard L. Watson Jr., "Congressional Attitudes Toward Military Preparedness, 1829-1835," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXIV (March, 1948), 61ff.

<sup>3</sup> Emery Upton, The Military Policy of the United States (Washington, 1912), 151.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 160 f.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 184.



1845, the army was increased to 31,000, but by late 1848 was reduced to 10,320 officers and men.<sup>6</sup> By 1860 the regular army had been increased to 18,000, of which only some 15,000 were fit and available for duty.<sup>7</sup>

The basic function of the regular army during the early nineteenth century was to defend the coasts and international borders from external attack. On the western frontier, however, the army had the additional task of maintaining order among the various Indian tribes and of protecting advancing pioneers from Indian depredations. Coastal and border posts were usually garrisoned by artillery regiments, whereas western military positions were manned by infantry and mounted units. The complexion of the eastern defense system varied little from decade to decade, but in the West the burdens of the frontier soldier increased at an alarming rate. As the Indian frontier was gradually rolled back and new territory was added, western garrisons had a greater area to patrol and more people to protect. The army acted not only as policeman and trailblazer, but also as "tavern keeper" and guide for the thousands of immigrants who traveled the Oregon and Santa Fe trails prior to the Civil War.<sup>8</sup>

Between 1830 and 1860 about half of the aggregate strength of the army was distributed among the twelve major

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>8</sup> William A. Ganoe, The History of the United States Army (New York, 1942), 158f.

posts west of or near the Mississippi River. For example, in 1830, of the 5,951 officers and men, 2,208 were garrisoned in numbers of 100 to 500 at Forts Brady, Mackinac, Howard, Snelling, Crawford, Winnebago in Michigan Territory, Armstrong Illinois, Leavenworth, Missouri, Gibson, Cherokee Nation, Jesup, Louisiana, and Jefferson Barracks Missouri.<sup>9</sup> Thirty years later 9,689 of the 18,114 authorized officers and men were distributed among the western posts. The number of posts had increased from twelve to forty-three, each with an average of 200 or more men.<sup>10</sup> During the same period the population of the United States had spiraled from approximately fourteen millions to more than thirty-five millions. Likewise, the land area of the United States had grown to its present size of nearly three million square miles, the result of a more complete exploitation of the Louisiana Territory, by acquisition of lands from Mexico by conquest and purchase, and by peaceful settlement of the Northeast and Northwest boundaries with Great Britain.<sup>11</sup>

The prevailing military policies for the mid-nineteenth century frontier were necessarily intertwined with the prevailing Indian policies. After the War of 1812

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<sup>9</sup> American State Papers, Military Affairs (Washington, 1860), IV, 591.

<sup>10</sup> Oliver Lyman Spaulding, The United States Army in War and Peace (New York, 1937), 240.

<sup>11</sup> Dan E. Clark, The West in American History (New York, 1937), Ch. XXIX, passim.

pioneers pressed into Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Michigan Territory, and ultimately, into the Texas province of Mexico. Military garrisons were placed at strategic points in advance of farmers and cattlemen to act as the "cutting edge" of civilization. These western garrisons, as previously mentioned, had the multifold task of keeping the Indians and whites from clashing. This mission meant that the army was policing the frontier to prevent renegade whites, unlicensed traders, and impatient farmers from taking advantage of those tribes who had made treaty agreements with the United States in regard to relocation in the West. At the same time it was the duty of the military to keep the Indian within his prescribed area, to forestall inter-tribal warfare, and to attempt to prevent Indian ravages on white settlements behind or in advance of treaty boundaries. There being no effective civil government to cope with the transgressions of Indian and white, the army frequently acted as disciplinarian on the frontier. Punitive expeditions were as common as exploratory and patrolling maneuvers during the pre-Civil War period.

In 1830 Congress had passed a law authorizing the President, Andrew Jackson, to make treaties with various Indian tribes for the purpose of exchanging land in the East

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Henry P. Beers, The Western Military Frontier (Philadelphia, 1935), Ch. II, passim; see also, Francis P. Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet (Madison, 1953), Ch. V, passim.

for a comparable acreage west of the Mississippi River. Consequently, military police activity increased in the territory now encompassed by the states of Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma. In order to carry out the removal policy, Western Indian tribes, including the Osage, Comanche, Pawnee, and Kiowa first were removed from lands which they occupied between the Missouri and Red Rivers to make room for the newcomers.<sup>13</sup> To keep the inevitable friction at a minimum, the line of military posts was extended and enlarged in depth from the upper Mississippi Valley to the Red and Sabine Rivers in the Southwest. In addition to patrolling new Indian territory in the Southwest, the army was faced with the task of watching an international boundary between the United States and Mexico. The British and Mexican governments feared the unending explosive expansion of the American frontier. This was especially true in the Southwest during the 1820's and 1830's when numerous pioneers were spilling into Mexican territory. "Gone to Texas" paved the way for rumblings of purchase or annexation.<sup>14</sup>

Texas joined the United States through the formality of a joint resolution in Congress, but a war with Mexico was precipitated. The war brought additional territory to the

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<sup>13</sup>  
Grant Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 1830-1860 (Norman, 1933), 15f.

<sup>14</sup>  
Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (New York, 1947), 248f.

United States in 1848, and with the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, contiguous continental territorial acquisitions ended. The occupation of Texas and New Mexico was carried out by the army during and after the war with Mexico, at which time thirty-two additional permanent and temporary military posts had been constructed. The policy of restricting Indians to specific regions was carried into the new territory to account for some of the new posts. Others were established along the Rio Grande to guard the international border, to act as agents of assimilation for newly acquired, Spanish-speaking peoples, and to offer lodgings to westbound miners, cattlemen, and farmers.<sup>15</sup>

In keeping with the latter function, military posts also were established along the Oregon and Santa Fe trails as havens for immigrant parties traveling to the West Coast. The army posts provided supply depots, a protection against hostile Indians, a resting place for the tired, and a sanatorium for the sick and dying. These posts, initially established as wayside inns, later assumed the same roles as their eastern predecessors in upholding the Indian restriction policies of the federal government. The trend of westward migration that started well before the Civil War continued afterward with military posts paving the way for

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<sup>15</sup>Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 173.

civilian communities.<sup>16</sup>

Eleven frontier military installations were in operation in 1830 when the Indian removal policies of John C. Calhoun and James Monroe were put into effect by Andrew Jackson, a champion of unhindered westward expansion. These posts had served as centers for Indian control during the fifteen year period following the War of 1812. They were, moreover, recognized as links in the frontier defense line which extended from the Great Lakes south to the Red River.<sup>17</sup>

In 1822, Fort Brady had been built at the northernmost point of the defense line at Sault Ste. Marie in Michigan Territory. Colonel Hugh Brady and a battalion of the Second Infantry Regiment erected the fort on a tract of land ceded by the Chippewas, from which point the garrison operated among the Chippewa and Sauk tribes of the Northwest.<sup>18</sup> About forty-five miles south-southwest of Fort Brady, a former British post, Fort Mackinac, had been occupied temporarily by United States forces at the end of the War of 1812. Fort Mackinac had been made an integral link in the defense chain in 1817 after purchase from the American Fur Company in order to control transportation and Indian trade in the upper Great Lake region.<sup>19</sup> During the same year Colonel

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 174f; see also, Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 222.

<sup>17</sup> American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 591f; see also Clark, The West in American History, 236f.

<sup>18</sup> Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 46f.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 34.

John Miller and Major Charles Gratiot selected a site for a new military post at the mouth of the Fox River near the Green Bay settlement. The new post, Fort Howard, was built and garrisoned by troops of the Third Infantry Regiment commanded by Major Zachary Taylor. The fort occupied a strategic position for over a quarter of a century as intermediary between the Indians and whites who used the water highway of the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River.<sup>20</sup>

As a terminal in the defense line from Green Bay to the Mississippi River, Fort Crawford was constructed in 1819. Troops of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, commanded by General Thomas A. Smith, built the post and manned it for seven years.<sup>21</sup> In 1826 this establishment was abandoned and its troops were sent to Fort Snelling. Fort Crawford was reoccupied in 1827 as a result of a Winnebago Indian uprising and was not finally abandoned until 1845, when the necessity of sending troops to Mexico coincided with the end of Fort Crawford's usefulness on the Northwestern frontier.<sup>22</sup>

Incidental to the reoccupation of the latter post in 1827, Fort Winnebago had been established at the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers in order to handle the unruly

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<sup>20</sup>

Ibid., 33.

<sup>21</sup>

Ibid., loc. cit.

<sup>22</sup>

Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 24; 29.

Winnebagoes. Major David E. Twiggs and three companies of the First Infantry Regiment constructed the post which remained effective as long as the Winnebago Indians remained a threat to pioneer security. Specifically, its lifespan ended in 1845, when troops were dispatched to the war zone in Texas and Mexico.<sup>23</sup>

The extreme northwest sector of the frontier came under the jurisdiction of Fort Snelling, the construction of which coincided with the occupation of Forts Mackinac, Howard, and Crawford. But because of its isolated position and because of uncertain military planning, construction had been halted in 1821.<sup>24</sup> Two years later building recommenced and was speeded up rapidly with the arrival of the energetic Colonel Josiah Snelling, for whom the establishment was named. Although the fort's size and importance grew rapidly, there was some danger of its abandonment in 1826 when the entire frontier line was being pulled in toward the Mississippi. The garrison was merely reduced in size when many troops were sent to participate in the construction of Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis.<sup>25</sup> During the following decade the garrison's strength was restored in order to aid in the peaceful migration of Indians from East to West.

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<sup>23</sup>

Ibid., 24.

<sup>24</sup>

Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 45f.

<sup>25</sup>

Ibid., 53.



The post was maintained throughout the Mexican War and was not finally abandoned until 1858.<sup>26</sup>

Fort Armstrong had been erected in 1815 on the western edge of the Illinois frontier to superintend the activities of the Sauk Indians in relation to the expanding postwar frontier. The post was garrisoned during the 1820's by troops of the Fifth Infantry Regiment commanded by General Thomas A. Smith, whose forces were strengthened during the following decade by volunteer troops for participation in the Black Hawk War.<sup>27</sup> After 1836 Fort Armstrong's part in the communication line between Fort Smith, Arkansas, and Fort Crawford was no longer deemed necessary. The military Indian frontier was moving westward into Kansas and Nebraska, consequently troops of the First Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William Davenport, abandoned<sup>28</sup> Fort Armstrong and moved to Forts Crawford and Snelling.

A temporary and premature extension of the defense line had been developed in 1819 when Fort Atkinson was established some 800 miles northwest of the mouth of the Missouri River. General Henry Atkinson, for whom the post was named, was given the command of 1,100 soldiers who had traveled 2,600 miles from Plattsburg, New York in order to make

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<sup>26</sup>

Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 193.

<sup>27</sup>

Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 45; 83.

<sup>28</sup>

Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 29.

extensive surveys for military roads east and northeast of  
the new post.<sup>29</sup> In 1826 General Jacob Brown, Commander of  
the Army, intimated that frontier defenses could best be  
maintained by strengthening an exterior line from Green Bay  
to the mouth of the Mississippi River. At the same time he  
recommended the establishment of an infantry training school  
on the Mississippi River somewhere between the two extremes.  
The future of Fort Atkinson was thereby nipped in the bud,  
for shortly after General Brown's pronouncement four companies  
of the First Infantry Regiment were transferred from Fort  
Atkinson to the prospective infantry school at Jefferson  
Barracks, Missouri.<sup>30</sup> The location of Fort Atkinson had  
been ideal for scouting operations and patrolling missions  
among the various plains tribes, but as a potential wayside  
post on a route to the Rockies and beyond, it was too far  
up the Missouri for all-weather travel. The abandonment led  
to the strengthening of Jefferson Barracks as a central deploy-  
ment depot and for the later development of Fort Leavenworth.<sup>31</sup>

Prior to 1826 some troops had been quartered for a  
time in a collection of rude huts under the bluffs of the  
Mississippi River ten miles south of St. Louis. During  
1826, Camps Miller and Adams, as the shack cantonments were

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<sup>29</sup>

Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 44.

<sup>30</sup>

Ibid., 53.

<sup>31</sup>

Ibid., 95.

called, were merged to form Jefferson Barracks. General Henry Atkinson selected the name to honor Thomas Jefferson who had died that year. Permanent stone buildings gradually replaced the temporary wooden structures, neither of which really did justice to the memory of Thomas Jefferson, architect.<sup>32</sup> General Atkinson made Jefferson Barracks his headquarters and occasionally the headquarters for the Department of the West until his death in 1842. This post truly became the gateway to the West. Not only was it the first western infantry training school, but also it mothered the First Regiment of Dragoons, which, as previously noted, was born in 1833. Through this hub passed most ordnance, quartermaster, and medical supplies for all posts in the department. Its proximity to St. Louis made it a favorite for the younger officers as well as for curious travelers.<sup>33</sup>

Coinciding with the development of Jefferson Barracks and the abandonment of Fort Atkinson was the establishment of Cantonment Leavenworth about thirty miles west of the Missouri border on the Missouri River. The post was erected on a site which had been selected by Colonel Henry Leavenworth; for whom it was named. Captain William G. Belknap and troops of the Third Infantry Regiment constructed and garrisoned the post until 1829, after which date the

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<sup>32</sup>

Ibid., 54.

<sup>33</sup>

Ibid., 11; 155f.

Sixth Infantry Regiment replaced the Third.<sup>34</sup> The major task of the Leavenworth garrisons was to protect the Osage, Kansas, Kickapoo, and Delaware Indians who had ceded adjacent lands to the United States during the previous decade. Because these tribes tended to disperse more and more to the west of the Missouri River, it was necessary in 1834 for the First Dragoons to replace the Sixth Infantry. With a mounted force available it then was possible to protect the isolated frontier communities from the bellicose Arikaras,<sup>35</sup> Blackfeet, and Assiniboin tribes of the North.

For many years there were considerable gaps separating the various posts of the middle group on the frontier. Until Jefferson Barracks was constructed there had been no major military establishment between Fort Armstrong and Fort Smith. The latter post was started in 1817 at the fork of the Arkansas and Poteau Rivers. It had as its mission the protection of all settlers in the vicinity. Built and commanded by Captain William Bradford, Fort Smith was in the cockpit of the intrigue which surrounded the final settlement of the Florida purchase and the separation of Mexico from Spain in 1821. Thereafter, settlers from Arkansas traveled through Fort Smith into Texas through the Red River valley.<sup>36</sup> These

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<sup>34</sup>

Ibid., 84.

<sup>35</sup>

Ibid., 105.

<sup>36</sup>

Ibid., 58; see also, Grant Foreman, Pioneer Days in the early Southwest (Cleveland, 1926), 35.

migrants maintained that it was the duty of the United States government to afford protection, despite the fact they no longer resided in the United States. The government acquiesced, but only under the guise of peace maker among the Osage who were at war with the Comanche, Pawnee, and Choctaw tribes along the Red River. In 1824 the main body of the Fort Smith garrison moved up the Arkansas to the mouth of the Neosho River, where Fort Gibson was first constructed. In the meantime, Captain Benjamin L. E. Bonneville was left behind in charge of a skeleton force.<sup>37</sup> In 1833 the Fort Smith garrison was strengthened by the arrival of several companies of the Seventh Infantry Regiment, under the command of Captain John E. B. Stuart. The reoccupation of the fort was a part of an overall campaign by the federal government to control the trade and traffic of supplies and whiskey to the newly organized Creek, Cherokee, and Choctaw Nations. The post was temporarily abandoned in 1834 when its garrison was transferred to newly erected Fort Coffee,<sup>38</sup> some twelve miles upstream from Fort Smith.

As mentioned above, Fort Gibson was started in 1824 when a post in advance of Fort Smith was needed. Captain Pierce Butler directed troops of the Seventh Infantry Regiment in the fashioning of rude wooden quarters and commissary

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<sup>37</sup>

Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, 63.

<sup>38</sup>

Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 109.

buildings. Extensive building continued for the next ten years. While the removal of the Five Civilized Tribes was in progress, Fort Gibson became headquarters for the Seventh Infantry Regiment under General Mathew Arbuckle.<sup>39</sup> In 1833 the Secretary of War recommended that the post be abandoned. His proposal was prompted by a series of petitions from leading Cherokee statesmen, who wished an end to military interference. Despite Cherokee opposition and a poor health record, Congress appropriated money for extensive repairs,<sup>40</sup> and in 1834 stone and masonry construction was begun.

At the southern tip of the defense line, Fort Jesup had been established in 1821 on a ridge between the Red and Sabine Rivers. Six companies of the Seventh Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Zachary Taylor, set to work constructing log and plank barracks and store houses. When Taylor was transferred in 1822, Lieutenant Colonel James B. Many commanded the post the next sixteen years. During his tenure troops of the Third and Sixth Infantry Regiments passed through to guard the Texas frontier or to fight in the Seminole campaigns in Florida.<sup>41</sup> In 1845, prior to the outbreak of the War with Mexico, Fort Jesup was abandoned as

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Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, 68ff.

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American State Papers, Military Affairs, V, 242.

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J. Fair Hardin, "Four Forgotten Frontier Posts of Western Louisiana," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XVI (January, 1933), 7f; see also, Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 68.

troops moved to Corpus Christi, Texas and later to the Rio Grande Valley.<sup>42</sup>

However, before its natural demise Fort Jesup had spawned Fort Towson to the north along the Red River. In order to protect the Cherokee and Choctaws from invaders from the South, Captain Russell B. Hyde and one company of the Third Infantry had erected temporary quarters at the present site of Fort Towson in 1824.<sup>43</sup> During the ensuing five years, a network of roads was begun to connect Forts Jesup, Towson, Smith, and Gibson.<sup>44</sup> Fort Towson was abandoned in 1829, but was reoccupied in 1831 by Major Stephen W. Kearny and troops of the Third Infantry. The main function of the post thereafter was the superintendence of trade with the Choctaws in the adjacent area, where occasional civil disorders arose.<sup>45</sup>

Between 1830 and 1845 thirteen military posts were constructed along the western frontier defense line. Some were additions to the existing system; others merely replaced posts whose locations had proved unhealthy or were too far removed from scenes of inter-tribal or inter-racial conflict. Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, for example, was built to meet a

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<sup>42</sup>

Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 171.

<sup>43</sup>

Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, 61n.

<sup>44</sup>

Ibid., 114.

<sup>45</sup>

Ibid., 61; see also, Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 115f.

particular emergency as well as to strengthen the existing line. The post was established in 1832 by regular troops on the Wisconsin River about twenty-five miles above Fort Crawford. In the meantime, Wisconsin and Illinois volunteers were successfully forcing Sauk and Fox Indians to retreat from Eastern areas toward the Fort Atkinson-Fort Crawford line. The usefulness of Fort Atkinson lasted only a few years after 1833, inasmuch as the army and the forward edge of white settlement were continuously forcing the Indians westward.<sup>46</sup>

A number of temporary camps also had been constructed to facilitate the removal of the Plains Indians west of the Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana borders in order to make room for Eastern tribes. In 1831 a small detachment, commanded by Lieutenant Jefferson Davis, was placed at Dubuque, Iowa, to prevent white infiltration into Sauk and Fox lands to the north. When the latter Indians moved westward during the following three years, the vacuum was filled by white settlers who were attracted by the rich mineral lands formerly held by the Indians.<sup>47</sup>

Farther south, in the area of present Oklahoma, mounted troops were sent from Forts Gibson and Wayne into the interior to impress the Osage, Comanche, and Pawnee

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<sup>46</sup>Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 86.<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 111.



tribes with a display of military strength and at the same time pave the way for incoming Choctaws and Creeks. As a base for the latter project, Camp Holmes was erected in 1833 on the North Canadian River about sixty miles above its mouth. It was abandoned during the following year when patrol activities moved to the south.<sup>48</sup> In 1834 another cantonment, also named Camp Holmes, was built and maintained on the South Canadian River about 150 miles west of Fort Gibson. From these respective posts mounted infantry and dragoon detachments were dispatched during the summers of 1832, and 1834 to warn local tribes that no hostilities on their part would be tolerated.<sup>49</sup>

Two temporary camps, both named for General Mathew Arbuckle, were established in the same general area. The first was built in 1833 about six miles south of Fort Gibson. From this post, elements of the First Dragoons aided in expediting the relocation of Plains Indians and the resettlement of the Five Civilized Tribes.<sup>50</sup> To the northwest, near the mouth of the Cimmaron River, the second Camp Arbuckle was built and garrisoned by the First Dragoons in 1834. Like Camp Holmes, the latter post was used as a base for a series of dragoon expeditions on the prairies during the mid-1830's. It was hoped that the establishment of Camp Arbuckle would

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<sup>48</sup>

Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, 114.

<sup>49</sup>

Ibid., 128.

<sup>50</sup>

Ibid., 101.

bring peace among the Kiowa, Pawnee, and Comanche tribes, especially after the failure of the 1832 expedition, which had been decimated by a fatal fever.<sup>51</sup>

Fort Coffee had been established in 1834, the year of Fort Smith's temporary abandonment, by the First Dragoons on the Arkansas River about twelve miles from the latter post. Fort Coffee was built near the site of a trading post formerly occupied by Holland Coffee and was intended as a receiving point for relocated Choctaws. Four years after its establishment, the fort was abandoned since the Choctaw removal had been almost completed. All troops and equipment were transported downstream where reconstruction at Fort Smith was in progress.<sup>52</sup>

During the summer of 1834, Lieutenant George H. Crosman selected a site for a post near the mouth of the Des Moines River, about twenty miles below old Fort Madison. Lieutenant Crosman was joined in September by Lieutenant Colonel Stephen W. Kearny in command of three companies of dragoons from Fort Gibson. Temporary quarters were erected on the site, which became known as Camp Des Moines Number One. However, it was a poor location in two respects. It was necessary for patrols to travel many miles upstream in order to survey the neutral ground between the Sioux and the Sauk

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 129.<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 275.

and Fox tribes. More often than not, troops arrived too late to prevent clashes between the two parties.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the camp was in an unhealthy position in respect to the flood areas of the Mississippi and Des Moines Rivers. After an especially severe inundation in 1835, George Catlin, an American artist, stopped at the post long enough to observe that the parade ground and many buildings were submerged and that the soldiers had moved into tents on higher ground.<sup>54</sup>

In 1836 troops were sent from Fort Crawford to the Seminole War in Florida, but Camp Des Moines was retained as a dragoon post under the command of Captain Edwin V. Sumner. As a result of Sioux boldness and restlessness after the removal of the Fort Crawford garrison, Sumner led an extensive expedition during the summer of 1836 to discourage further disturbances.<sup>55</sup> Camp Des Moines Number One was abandoned during the following summer inasmuch as settlers were preempting the lands left vacant by the westbound Sioux, Sauk, and Fox Indians. The dragoon garrison was dispatched to Camp Leavenworth to help spearhead a new military-Indian frontier.<sup>56</sup>

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Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 115f.

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George Catlin, Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians (London, 1844), II, 98.

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Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 120.

56

Ibid., 126.

During the five years preceding the Mexican War, five other posts were established to augment existing garrisons. Fort Atkinson, Iowa, was built on the Turkey River about fifty miles south of Fort Crawford by a company of the First Infantry Regiment under the direction of Captain Isaac Lynde. The post was established to maintain peace among neighboring tribes, but especially to protect the Winnebagos from incursions of the Sioux. The army also had special orders to expel squatters from Winnebago lands and to suppress illegal liquor traffic in Indian territory.<sup>57</sup> Fort Atkinson was abandoned in 1845 when inter-tribal conflict had abated considerably and the urgency of the Mexican campaigns made it necessary to send the garrison with Colonel S. W. Kearny's expedition to Santa Fe.<sup>58</sup>

In 1842 Captain John H. K. Burgwin and a company of dragoons from Fort Leavenworth traveled to a site near Council Bluffs on the Mississippi River where they constructed a temporary camp which was named Fort Croghan in honor of the Inspector General, Colonel George Croghan. The post was established for the purpose of protecting the Potawatomes from the invasions of westbound settlers and the war-like Sioux.<sup>59</sup> During the spring of 1843 a serious flood destroyed

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27. <sup>57</sup> Ibid., 139f; see also Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet,  
<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 140.  
<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 140.

most of the log buildings and made it necessary to abandon that position in favor of one on higher ground.<sup>60</sup> Troops stayed in the area in makeshift quarters until October when they returned to Fort Leavenworth after the Potawatomies had agreed to relocate west of the latter post.<sup>61</sup>

Somewhat more successful was the maintenance of Fort Scott on the Marmiton River about three miles west of the Missouri state line. Troops from abandoned Fort Wayne built Fort Scott in 1842 on a site suggested by Lieutenant Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock, who had predicted the end of Fort Wayne's usefulness in 1841.<sup>62</sup> By 1845 the Indian-control aspect of Fort Scott's mission had declined, yet the post was retained as a vital way station for military and civilian travelers on the road to Fort Leavenworth and Santa Fe.<sup>63</sup>

Camp Holmes and Arbuckle, having been evacuated, were replaced in 1835 by a more durable post on the Washita River. Fort Washita was established in 1842 about twenty miles above the mouth of the river for which it was named. It was built in order to protect the Creeks and Chickasaws.

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<sup>60</sup> Maria R. Audubon, Audubon and His Journals (New York, 1897), I, 478.

<sup>61</sup> Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 141.

<sup>62</sup> Grant Foreman, (ed)., A Traveller in Indian Territory (Cedar Rapids, 1930), 27.

<sup>63</sup> Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 142.

If the Cherokees and Choctaws considered themselves over-protected, the Creeks and Chickasaws had little defense against the depredations of the wild, wandering tribes to the west and south.<sup>64</sup> Strong expeditions were sent up the Arkansas and Red Rivers during the summer of 1845 as a result of Pawnee attacks on Creek villages. The post's garrison was reduced later that year after the establishment of other posts in Texas, yet was maintained as an essential element on the Indian frontier.<sup>65</sup>

The name of Fort Des Moines was resurrected in the spring of 1843 when a company of dragoons, led by Captains George W. Allen and John R.B. Gardenier, erected a more substantial post than the earlier Des Moines. The second camp was located on the Des Moines River, about 150 miles from its mouth in present day Iowa. The major purpose of the new post was to effect the removal of the Sauk and Fox Indians south of the Platte River and, at the same time, to prevent the advance of squatters before the removal deadline, October 11, 1845. The mission was not accomplished until March, 1846, after which time the troops were withdrawn and the government land was sold to settlers who by one means or another had encircled the reservation. After the lands

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<sup>64</sup>Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, 283.<sup>65</sup>Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 143.

sales, a town grew rapidly and by 1857 it had become the state capitol.<sup>66</sup>

One final post was constructed as a part of the military frontier before the Mexican War, Fort Wilkins. It was established at Point Isabelle, Michigan on Lake Superior. Its function was to superintend mining activities on land acquired from the Chippewas in 1843. Captain Robert E. Clary and two companies of the Fifth Infantry Regiment built the post on a site selected by General Henry Brady, who named it for the new Secretary of War, William Wilkins. Although the superintendence of government mines was a function of the Department of War, the hostilities with Mexico were more pressing. In 1846, companies of the Second Infantry Regiment, that had replaced the Fifth Infantry, abandoned Fort Wilkins and traveled to the Rio Grande.<sup>67</sup>

The fifteen years preceding the Civil War witnessed an unparalleled development and extension of the military-Indian frontier. The annexation of Texas, the acquisition of land by conquest and purchase from Mexico, and the settlement of the Oregon boundary question made the maintenance of horizontal as well as vertical defense lines necessary. The normal vertical pattern extended from the Great Lakes to

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Jacob Van Der Zee, "Forts in the Iowa Country," The Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XII (April, 1914), 165.

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Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 148; 170.

the Rio Grande. The upper apex of the line did not move until the 1850's, when Forts Ripley and Ridgely were established in Minnesota. Meanwhile, at the southern tip of the line, a perpendicular horizontal pattern was being formed by a string of posts along the Rio Grande and the Santa Fe trail which merged in New Mexico. Concurrently, in the north, the Oregon trail had fostered a number of wayside military posts in the establishment of Forts Laramie, Kearny, and Bridger. Forts on both horizontal lines were often 68 hundreds of miles in advance of the wave of civilization.

Fort Kearny, established in 1846 on Table Creek, Nebraska, was one of a group of proposed posts on the Oregon trail. Construction was begun in May, 1846 by a detachment of the First Dragoons from Fort Leavenworth under the command of Colonel Stephen W. Kearny, who made the original survey and recommendation for the post. The primary purpose of the fort was to house a garrison large enough to maintain order among the Indians in that region and to suppress any illegal liquor traffic. A secondary mission was added; that of aiding immigrants who traveled the northern route 69 to California and Oregon.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Mexican War, Kearny

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68  
Averam B. Bender, The March of Empire (Lawrence, Kansas, 1952), Ch. III.

69  
Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 149.



reported to the Adjutant General that work on the post was being hampered by the transfer of one company to the war zone. Moreover, Kearny observed that his remaining force of thirty soldiers and seven civilians had been rendered almost useless by serious illness.<sup>70</sup> Work was suspended in June, 1846, by a War Department order. In July the troops were withdrawn and ordered to join the garrisons of Jefferson Barracks, Fort Atkinson, Fort Des Moines, and Fort Leavenworth<sup>71</sup> on the march to Santa Fe under Colonel Kearny.

Although Fort Kearny was reoccupied by volunteer troops in the spring of 1847, Lieutenant Daniel P. Woodbury was looking for a more suitable location farther west. In November, 1847, Woodbury reported to General Joseph Totten, Chief of Engineers, that a good site had been located on the Platte River near Grand Island. General Totten was advised that Missouri volunteers and civilian workers could complete the project in a relatively short period of time. Recognizing good soil conditions, Woodbury pointed out that civilian farmers should be hired to plant several forage and food crops before the arrival of a permanent garrison. Most construction was completed during the following year, and by December, 1848, the post was ready for the occupancy

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<sup>70</sup> Colonel S.W. Kearny to General R. Jones, 30 May 1846, typed MS in the Nebraska State Historical Society Library, Lincoln, Nebraska.

<sup>71</sup> Colonel S. W. Kearny to General R. Jones, 22 June 1846, in ibid.

of troops returning from Mexico. In January, 1849, the Platte River post was formally named Fort Kearny.<sup>72</sup>

Another extension of the Oregon trail military line was made in the summer of 1849. The purchase of Fort Laramie from the American Fur Company was negotiated by Lieutenant D. P. Woodbury and Major W. F. Sanderson at a cost of \$4,000. Woodbury reported to General Totten that the purchase price included only the buildings and equipment of the American Fur Company and that the land was still owned by local Indians. Reconstruction and remodeling operations were carried on through 1849 by soldiers and civilian workers. During June, 1849, Woodbury observed that more than 4,400 immigrants had passed through or near the fort. By 1850, enough facilities had been added to care for the sick and to provide supplies and repair shops for many more needy travelers.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the Mexican War, the Indian frontier in the northwest moved forward. In 1848 the Winnebagoes were relocated for a second time by being moved from a neutral ground to a new area on the Chippewa lands west of the

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Lieutenant D. P. Woodbury to General J. G. Totten, 10 November 1847; 9 December 1847; 11 December 1847; and 7 December 1848, in Ibid.

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Lieutenant D. P. Woodbury to General J. G. Totten, 15 November 1849, in Ibid.; see also Leroy R. Hafen and Francis M. Young, Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 1834-1890 (Glendale, 1938), 146f.

Mississippi River. To prevent intertribal clashes and possible warfare on pioneer farmers, Fort Ripley was established in 1849 on the Mississippi River a few miles below the mouth of the Crow Wing River. A garrison was maintained during the years preceding the Civil War, except for a brief period in 1857 when the local horizon was devoid of Indian troubles.<sup>74</sup>

While most Iowa forts were established to protect the Indian from members of his own race and from squatters, Fort Dodge was called into being in 1850 for a different reason. During its short lifetime, this post served as a source of protection for the pioneer farmers who were constantly harassed by the Sioux. It remained a military reservation for only three years, after which it became a civil community with the same name.<sup>75</sup>

When Fort Dodge was abandoned, a new post was established in the upper Mississippi Valley as a bulwark against a potential Sioux resistance to a growing white population in the upper valley. Fort Ridgely was built in 1853 on the Mississippi River near the Sioux lands, which were being opened to white settlers on account of the recognized fertility of the soil. The usefulness of this post lasted through the post-Civil War period when westward migration

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<sup>74</sup> Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 28; see also George C. Tanner, "History of Fort Ripley," Collections of the State Historical Society of Minnesota, X (1905), 181f.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 27.

increased and railroads made further inroads on Indian territories.<sup>76</sup>

On the southern extremity of the military-Indian frontier, posts were established from Fort Washita, near the Red River, to the Rio Grande. Before the outbreak of the Mexican War, General Zachary Taylor moved his forces from Corpus Christi in 1846 to the mouth of the Rio Grande where he constructed a model, but impractical fortification, Fort Brown. Slightly to the rear and northeast of the Rio Grande defense line, Fort Polk was built at Port Isabel, Texas. As the campaigns of the war moved deeper into Mexico, other posts were established along the Rio Grande, which served as guardians of the International border after the war. Two such posts, built early in 1848, were Ringgold Barracks, near Rio Grande City and Fort Bliss, near El Paso. The former post was named for a daring artillery officer, Major Samuel Ringgold, who was killed in Mexico while defending a retreating mounted force. The latter post, whose name and usefulness have survived to the twentieth century, was named for Lieutenant Colonel William W. S. Bliss, General Taylor's son-in-law and aide.<sup>77</sup>

In 1849 Fort McIntosh was constructed at Laredo, Texas, on the Rio Grande, about 118 miles above Ringgold

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<sup>76</sup>  
Ibid., 29.

<sup>77</sup>  
Bender, The March of Empire, 33; 36.

Barracks. The former post served as an intermediate station on the border until its temporary abandonment in 1858. Fort Duncan, also established in 1849, arose at Eagle Pass, Texas, 125 miles above Fort McIntosh; it too served the purpose of international guardian and pioneer haven until its abandonment by Union forces in 1861. In order to protect the settlers of East Texas from marauding Indians, the military line was extended to the north in Texas during 1849. On the Llano River, about five miles below its source, Fort Inge was established as a temporary post, and about fifty miles northwest of San Antonio, Fort Lincoln was begun on Seco Creek. The line was completed with the establishment of Fort Graham, in May, 1849, and Fort Worth in June. The latter post was located on the Trinity River.

As Texas settlements were extended, the frontier line moved westward, new posts were established between 1850 and 1856. Several remained active until the Civil War, when, although abandoned by federal forces, were later regarrisoned. In 1850, Fort Merrill was built on the Nueces River about fifty miles northwest of Corpus Christi. The following year saw the establishment of Fort Belknap on the Brazos River, about eleven miles above the mouth of the Clear Fork, and Fort Mason on Commanche Creek some eight miles from its junction with the Llano River. The westward line bulged

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<sup>78</sup>  
Oliver Knight, Fort Worth-Outpost on the Trinity  
(Norman, 1954), 232f.

forward in 1852, when Fort McKavett was built at the source of the San Saba River. Its isolation was somewhat diminished during the following year with the erection of Fort Clark at the source of the Las Moras River and of Fort Chadbourne on Oak Creek, about seventeen miles above the Red Fork of the Colorado River. In 1853 the Department of War designated the small Texas departments of the Division of the West as the Department of Texas. The newly unified command was given over to General William S. Harney whose headquarters had been located at Austin since 1847.<sup>79</sup>

Military activities in New Mexico territory dated from 1845 when an expedition of Santa Fe traders was accompanied by a dragoon escort. No military post was established, however, until 1847 when Colonel Stephen W. Kearny's forces marched from Jefferson Barracks and other posts during the Mexican War. Kearny maintained his military headquarters at Santa Fe until late 1848, when he was ordered to California. Fort Marcy became the first permanent military post in New Mexico when it was constructed in Santa Fe in 1849. Other temporary camps were later developed as permanent stations to guard the southern route to the Pacific and to maintain order among the Indians of the Southwest. In 1851 Fort Conrad was constructed at Valverde, but

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<sup>79</sup> Bender, The March of Empire, 35f; see also Rapheal P. Thian, Charts of Military Divisions, Departments, Districts and of States and Territories, 1813-1860 (Washington, n.d.), Chart Number One.

was abandoned in 1854. Also in 1851 Forts Defiance, Fillmore, and Union were erected west of Santa Fe and Albuquerque. The latter two lasted until the Civil War, while the former appropriately survived the entire "storm."<sup>80</sup> In 1852 Cantonment Burgwin near Taos and a post at Las Lunas were established to complete the group of pre-Civil War posts in New Mexico. In October, 1853 the latter area, including parts of present Arizona, Colorado, and Utah was designated as the Department of New Mexico.<sup>81</sup>

On the Pacific coast another group of military posts was established to prevent interracial clashes. In California most major settlements were garrisoned during the Mexican War and other troops were stationed at Benicia Barracks in 1849 and at Fort Yuma in 1850. By 1852 Forts Umpqua, Lane, Jones, Humbolt had been established along the northern frontier and Forts Miller and Tejon in the southern area. When the Department of the Pacific was formed in 1857 Camp Bragg and Fort Crook were added to the northern defense line. In Oregon troops were stationed for a time at Vancouver, Oregon City, and Nisqually to avert Indian depredations.<sup>82</sup>

Military policy in regard to the establishment of

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<sup>80</sup>

Ibid., 37f.

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Thian, Charts of Military Divisions, Chart Number One.

<sup>82</sup>

Ibid., Chart Number One; see also Bender, The March of Empire, 41ff; and Clark, The West in American History, 491.

frontier posts was largely determined by the degree of pressure of the pioneer on the Indian. The military planners attempted to anticipate possible points of friction throughout the West and to act accordingly. Through trial and error a preventative action was followed to save lives of both Indian and white.



## CHAPTER II

### THE MILITARY CAREER

Army personnel of the period 1830-1860 has been alternately described as some sort of a "rag-tag-and-bob-tail herd" or as a group of "athletic young men of decent character and breeding." It has been both damned and praised. On one hand, its personnel was called the scum of the population, many of whom became drunks, were insubordinates or deserters. On the other hand, the army has been appraised as an effective force of "directed manpower" which aided tremendously in the development of the frontier. Contemporary accounts, made by foreign and American travelers and by officers and enlisted men, present a picture of stark realism in regard to the often gloomy role of the army on the frontier. Today historians are re-estimating the overall effect of the military frontier and are discovering that a tremendous amount of work was accomplished by an organized fraction of the total population.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike many European countries during the mid-nineteenth century, the United States had an army procured

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<sup>1</sup> Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, Ch. III.

entirely through voluntary enlistment in times of peace. During war, the small standing army was augmented by state militia and other volunteers for short periods of enlistment, as previously mentioned. However, the army was usually undermanned when recruiting fell short of goals, when desertions occurred, or when death and disease conspired against the effectiveness of the total strength. For example, in 1830 the authorized strength was set at 6,188 officers and men, but the actual force, excluding those absent on leave, on recruiting service, awaiting orders, or hospitalized, was only 3,731.<sup>2</sup> In 1836 the authorized strength was raised to 7,958 officers and men, but the actual service force was 4,282.<sup>3</sup> By 1860 the authorized number rose to 18,114, but when cadets, ordnance personnel, recruits, and those on travel orders were deducted, the service strength dropped to 14,072.<sup>4</sup>

Enlisted personnel were recruited from all walks of life and from all levels of society. Despite the breadth of circumstances, most soldiers undoubtedly entered the army during peace time because they lacked the physical and mental resources to meet the competition in civilian life. Any organization, whether at New Hope, Indiana or at Fort

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<sup>2</sup>

American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 719ff.

<sup>3</sup>

American State Papers, Military Affairs, VI, 806f.

<sup>4</sup>

The Report of the Secretary of War for 1850-60 as cited in Spaulding, The United States Army in War and Peace, 240.

Smith, Arkansas, which offered food, clothing, shelter, and spending money appealed to the alcoholic, the drifter, or the unemployable. Some enlistees sought escape rather than sanctuary, usually escape from the law or a woman. Percival Lowe, a dragoon sergeant, observed that one's moral or physical habits were of little concern to the recruiting officers as long as the volunteer was not too drunk at the time of enlistment. "Uniformity of size was not considered," Lowe wrote, "In my troop one man weighed one hundred pounds, and was five feet four, while several were above six feet and weighed from two hundred to two hundred and twenty-five pounds. Endurance was the test; all else was waived."<sup>6</sup> Lowe himself reflected that he had joined the dragoons in 1853 "to round out his education," to see something of the country, and to take part in some adventures. His only preparation for an army career had been persistent reading--travels, Indian campaigns, and explorations of contemporaries, real or fictional.<sup>7</sup>

James A. Bennett enlisted at Rochester, New York in 1849, having spent all his life on a farm. Bennett had met a soldier who told him that the service offered good board, clothing, medical care and a chance to travel. Impressed with the thought of traveling to California and perhaps

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<sup>6</sup> Percival Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon (Kansas City, 1906), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 5.

reaping a fortune in the gold fields, Bennett enlisted for five years under the alias of James A. Bronson.<sup>8</sup> At the expiration of his enlistment in 1854, he found himself in Santa Fe, New Mexico with back pay and allowances amounting to four hundred dollars. But he learned a lesson many others learned, that suddenly he was without a job, shelter and food and was hundreds of miles from home with no means of transportation. Consequently, like many others before and after, he took the line of least resistance by reinlisting.<sup>9</sup>

Another recruit, James Hildreth, was attracted by the uniform and bearing of dragoon recruiters who were stationed in the vicinity of Sacketts Harbor, New York. Finding that a newly organized dragoon regiment was destined for many adventures on the Plains, Hildreth enlisted under Lieutenant James H. K. Burgwin.<sup>10</sup> Upon reaching Jefferson Barracks early in 1833, the raw recruit was disillusioned when he discovered that poor food, crowded quarters, and ill treatment was the lot of the dragoon private.<sup>11</sup> At the end of a year Hildreth was more depressed when he found that

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<sup>8</sup> Clinton E. Brooks and Frank D. Reeve, (eds.), Forts and Forays, James A. Bennett: A Dragoon in New Mexico (Albuquerque, 1948), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 58f.

<sup>10</sup> James Hildreth, Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains (New York, 1836), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 45f.

"adventures on the Plains" included the back breaking physical labor of building and maintaining isolated frontier posts.<sup>12</sup>

Hildreth might have been more cheerful if he had known he was serving in something of an elite corps. In 1833 Charles Latrobe, a British traveler whom Washington Irving accompanied to Fort Gibson, observed the remarkable distinctions between the ordinary recruit and the dragoon recruit. The latter were "picked, athletic young men of decent character and breeding. They were all Americans, whereas, the ordinary recruits consist either of the scum of the population of the older states, or of worthless German, English, or Irish emigrants [sic]."<sup>13</sup> In March, 1833, Congress passed two significant pieces of legislation pertaining to the army's enlistment criteria. One act was designed to improve the soldiers' living conditions. It shortened the term of enlistment from five to three years, granted a bounty for re-enlistment, increased salaries, and restored corporal punishment for convicted deserters. The second act authorized the recruitment of a regiment of dragoons whose enlistment prerequisites would make for the building of an elite corps.<sup>14</sup> In 1835 the National Intel-  
ligencer pointed with pride to a group of eighty young men

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<sup>12</sup>

Ibid., 85.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Latrobe, The Rambler in North America, 1832-1833 (New York, 1835), I, 230f.

<sup>14</sup>

Upton, The Military Policy of the United States, 161; see also

from Pennsylvania who had been enlisted by Captain Edwin V. Sumner in the newly organized First Dragoon Regiment. "Sober habits and good character were...indispensable prerequisites to enlistment, and we doubt not that many of these young men will profit from their observation of the country...."<sup>15</sup>

Unlike the dragoon regiment, infantry and artillery regiments stationed in the West were not composed entirely of Americans. The European complexion of the United States Army during the nineteenth century was noticed by American officers and foreign travelers alike. Recruiting officers hesitated little in admitting recent immigrants, even though restrictive statutes limited the numbers of qualified candidates during the 1820's. During the following two decades, barriers were gradually lowered so that foreigners who possessed a basic knowledge of English and who had taken steps toward naturalization were placed on a level with native Americans. The reasons for which foreigners joined the army were similar to those of American citizens: unemployment, penury, the desire to travel, "a free ticket to the West,"<sup>16</sup> or the wish to become Americanized. For example, Percival Lowe, mentioned previously, met several such immigrant soldiers during his first few months at Fort Leavenworth in 1850. "Miller was an Englishman," Lowe recalled, "who had

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<sup>15</sup>

The National Intelligencer, April 1, 1835.

<sup>16</sup>

Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 45.

seen better days, and enlisted in New York because he was absolutely hungry - 'too proud to beg and too honest to steal' - Another, named O'Shea, had graduated from Dublin College and frequently showed his prowess as a boxer."<sup>17</sup>

Contemporary impressions of the immigrant soldier were frequently contradictory. Most American officers rated the immigrant on a par with the American-born soldier, except in the degree of initiative and resourcefulness. On the other hand, officers at a number of western posts found that foreign-born soldiers were less likely to desert.<sup>18</sup> Captain Frederick Marryat, like his countrymen Latrobe, held a rather poor opinion of the American army, when he visited the United States in 1837-38. He observed that the army was composed chiefly of Irish and German immigrants, deserters from English regiments in Canada, with only a few Americans who, he judged, had chosen between enlistment and starvation. Marryat noted that the lack of corporal punishment, except for cases of desertion, bred insubordination and insolence among such a group of "degenerates."<sup>19</sup> At Fort Howard, Wisconsin, Marryat joined a detachment of troops which was marching overland to Fort Winnebago. He reckoned that most

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<sup>17</sup>

Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 25f.

<sup>18</sup>

Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 44.

<sup>19</sup>

Frederick Marryat, A Diary in America (London, 1839), II, 305.

of the 100 man force were "Canada patriots" who, having failed to win Canadian independence from Great Britain,<sup>20</sup> were seeking refuge in the American army.

Charles A. Murray, a British geologist who traveled widely in the United States in 1834, 1835, and 1836, formed a similar opinion of the United States Army, but with reservations concerning the foreign element. He viewed the rank and file as too independent and disorderly to make good soldiers. "The most orderly soldiers now in the American army," he observed, "are the Irish, Scotch, and German emigrants...." Murray saw the latter group in considerable numbers and noted that they usually remained in the service for more than one term of enlistment.<sup>21</sup> When he visited Jefferson Barracks in September, 1835, Murray found nothing outstanding or exceptional in regard to the post's location or physical plant. However, he was tremendously impressed by the post band, which he considered the best he had heard during his travels to various western military establishments. The outstanding feature in regard to the Jefferson Barracks band, Murray thought, was that it was staffed almost entirely by foreigners, many of whom were German.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>

Ibid., II, 42.

<sup>21</sup>

Charles A. Murray, Travels in North America during the Years 1834, 1835, and 1836 (London, 1839), II, 87.

<sup>22</sup>

Ibid., II, 91.



One of the most remarkable records of nineteenth century army life is the diary of German-born Eugene Bandel, who arrived penniless in the United States in 1849. Unlike many immigrants, Bandel worked his way westward with a series of mechanic's jobs, the last of which was that of a locksmith. In 1850 he became stranded in St. Louis, but sensing the approach of cold weather solved his predicament by enlisting in the army for five years. While stationed at Fort Leavenworth in 1851, Bandel wrote to his parents that his companions were, for the most part, a sorry lot. He observed that the greater part of the army was composed of men who either did not like to work or who could not find work on account of their intemperance. Bandel found several Germans, who were former university students well mannered and most congenial. It was the latter group with whom he associated and came into contact with the others only when duty required it.<sup>23</sup>

Officers of the United States Army were quite different from the men whom they led. During the three decades under discussion, most officers had graduated from the Military Academy where they had received the best available military training in engineering, leadership, and discipline. Candidates were drawn largely from the upper strata of the democratic society, and many followed in the footprints of

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Eugene Bandel, Frontier Life in the Army, 1851-1861.  
Translated by Olga Bandel and Richard Jente. Ralph Bieber,  
(ed.) (Glendale, 1932), 114.

illustrious military forebears. The minority of the officer class were either militia officers or obtained appointments through political contacts. Some in the former category received regular appointments despite the fact that the army was drastically reduced after each emergency in which militia units were used. Inasmuch as the Military Academy was not organized until 1802, most top ranking officers who served between 1830 and 1860 lacked formal academic training but possessed many years of invaluable field experience. They usually were native Americans, although an occasional Englishman or Frenchman would don an American officer's uniform. As in the case of the enlisted personnel during the fifteen years prior to the Civil War, a respectable number of Germans became officers in the United States Army; among the twenty-three who served between 1844 and 1860, perhaps the most famous was Brigadier General John De Barth Walbach.<sup>24</sup>

The same foreign travelers who so maligned enlisted personnel were overly generous in their praise for the American officer. Marryat reflected that the company of officers at most western posts was very pleasant and agreeable in that most of them appeared to be intelligent and well informed. On the whole, however, Marryat believed that American officers

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Joseph G. Rosengarten, The German Soldier in the Wars of the United States (Philadelphia, 1886), 159f; see also Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army (Washington, 1903), I, passim.

lived unpleasant lives because their government expected too much from them. Not only did the officers have to contend with the insolence and desertions of ill-mannered recruits, but also, Marryat suggested, they were shifted from one isolated station to another with little opportunity for leaves of absence.<sup>25</sup> Charles Murray, like other British travelers, duly expressed his appreciation for military hospitality in the western wilderness. He found that conversations were usually witty and intelligent, meals were sumptuous and well served, and accommodations comfortable. Exceeded in candidness perhaps only by Marryat, Murray observed that during his visit in the West some officers drank to excess and some were incessant gamblers. These addictions Murray attributed to "habits of intimacy with some of the settlers of the West, who are not by birth, education,<sup>26</sup> or manners, fitted to associate with gentlemen."

The British traveler, Charles Latrobe, visited Fort Crawford and Fort Armstrong in 1833 where he enjoyed both the company of cultured officers and the serving of excellent food. Particularly in regard to the latter post, Latrobe expressed his gratitude for the hospitality of Lieutenant Colonel William Davenport who was an example of

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<sup>25</sup>

Marryat, A Diary in America, II, 302f.

<sup>26</sup>

Murray, Travels in North America, II, 86f.

kindness and gentle bearing of the United States officers....<sup>27</sup>  
 Colonel Davenport must have been an unusually gracious host,  
 for the following year when he commanded at Fort Leavenworth,  
 George Catlin, the American artist, appraised him as "a  
 gentleman of great urbanity of manners, with a Roman head  
 and a Grecian heart, restrained and tempered by the charms  
 of an American lady...."<sup>28</sup>

Judging from the mission and accomplishments of the  
 United States Army, 1830-60, there is little doubt that  
 most officers were men of talent and capability. They were  
 human, however. Petty jealousies and disagreements fre-  
 quently arose among them, when promotions often depended  
 upon the retirement or death of those on the upper rungs of  
 the ladder. The most revealing comments concerning the of-  
 ficer class come from their own members. For example,  
 there was an unbounded feeling of enmity by Academy men  
 toward militia and volunteer officers. During the Black  
 Hawk War a group of volunteer ranger officers stopped at  
 Fort Crawford where they dined in the officers' mess hall.  
 After their departure, the mess officer noticed, in going  
 over his accounts, that three bottles of cologne water had  
 been charged to the officers' mess fund by the post sutler.  
 Upon investigation, he discovered that the steward had used

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<sup>27</sup>

Latrobe, The Rambler in North America, II, 235.

<sup>28</sup>

Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 1.

the cologne to "sweeten up the dining room "after the militia officers' visit.<sup>29</sup> Lieutenant George H. Gordon, class of 1846, wrote to his mother to announce his safe arrival at Jefferson Barracks in October of the same year. At the same time, Gordon included comments on the various backgrounds of his new associates. "There were graduates from West Point, there were politicians from the western and southern sections of our country, men rewarded for their services or soothed and repayed thus by a preferment in Government service. Here also has sprung up a new avenue for sons of influential but destitute parents...."<sup>30</sup>

Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock, a severe and experienced critic, despised, among other things, volunteer troops. When assigned the task of mustering out such troops at Fort Leavenworth in 1848, Hitchcock confided to his diary, "I have discharged a good many companies.... It is vain to deny it; these troops [Mexican War volunteers] are unworthy the name of soldiers. The officers, for the most part, [are] little better than the men...."<sup>31</sup> He was equally critical of regular officers, most of whom he considered illiterate.

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<sup>29</sup>  
Mrs. John H. Kinzie, Wau-Bun-The "Early Day" in the North West, Milo M. Quaife, (ed.) (Chicago, 1932), 525.

<sup>30</sup>  
Lieutenant G. H. Gordon to Mrs. E.L.C. Gordon, 11 October 1846, G. H. Gordon Papers, 1842-60, Box Number 2, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>31</sup>  
W.A. Croffut, (ed.), Fifty Years in Camp and Field-Diary of Major General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, U.S.A. (New York, 1909), 325.

While at Fort Jesup, Louisiana, in 1837, Hitchcock estimated that he was surrounded by a group of men who knew little of books and who wasted many of his evenings with trivial conversations, petty quarreling, bragging, and old jokes.<sup>32</sup>

Among the older officers, Hitchcock found a well meaning friend in Zachary Taylor. General Taylor was noted for his verbosity and hot temper, which Hitchcock found a trifle annoying at a number of breakfast encounters before 6:00 A.M. But underneath Taylor's gruffness, Hitchcock found a broad streak of kindness and generosity. It was Taylor's aide and son-in-law, William W.S. Bliss, whom Hitchcock most admired and considered his equal in intellectual capacity. During the spring of 1842, when Hitchcock was not too busy with his investigation of the Cherokee government, he and Bliss would spend many hours discussing Kant, Lessing, and the ancient philosophers as a means of passing the idle hours at Fort Smith, Arkansas.<sup>33</sup> During the same year, Hitchcock was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and was transferred to the Third Infantry Regiment at Fort Leavenworth. The move separated him from his friend Bliss, but allowed Hitchcock to escape from a less desirable association. He confided to his diary, "Now, thank God, I am separated from Colonel Worth, I care less about the promotion than I do

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<sup>32</sup>

Ibid., 71.

<sup>33</sup>

Ibid., 70; 147.

for its effect.... Worth will never give an immediate subordinate any authority and permit him to move in anything without his special leave. No officer near him is or can be anything but a cipher unless he will quarrel all the time."<sup>34</sup>

Ulysses S. Grant, as a newly commissioned second lieutenant, was assigned to Jefferson Barracks in 1843, when Colonel Stephen W. Kearny was post commander. According to Grant, Kearny was "one of the ablest officers of the day... under him discipline was kept at a high standard, but without vexations, rules or regulations...." Many of the older officers Grant considered too pompous and overly impressed with their rank. Some apparently spent the greater part of their duty time issuing orders calculated to annoy subordinate officers. Grant observed that such commanders often developed sudden disabilities to avoid active service, especially at the outbreak of the Mexican War.<sup>35</sup>

There was, throughout the pre-Civil War period, an undercurrent of feeling in regard to the Military Academy and its near monopolization of supplying officers. In 1835 Charles Latrobe observed that the United States government expected a great deal from its army officers, yet, at the

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<sup>34</sup> Foreman, (ed.), A Traveller in Indian Territory, 180.

<sup>35</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant (New York, 1895), I, 25f.

same time, it was not entirely willing to intercede for them whenever civilian and military officials came into conflict. Latrobe viewed Congressional deafness to pleas for salary increases and for expansion of military strength as stemming from a prevailing attitude that the Military Academy was breeding "successive generations of aristocratic snobs." Beneath the Congressional Bias, Latrobe probed deep enough to find a traditional cause that the "navy was the nation's pet."<sup>36</sup>

Dragoon Sergeant James Hildreth thought the Academy creditable enough, but at the same time detrimental to progress. Hildreth's major objection was that an enlisted man, regardless of his merits or experience, could never hope to rise through the ranks into the officer class. The Military Academy, he observed, "monopolizes the right entirely of supplying the army with officers.... In Europe this is different; the enlisted soldier is not there excluded from the hope of arriving at the highest honors of the army."<sup>37</sup> A number of exceptions might seem to weaken Hildreth's argument, but it was true most of the time. For example, during the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Civil War, experienced enlisted men were elected as officers in state militia units which were called into federal service. Others, also

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<sup>36</sup>

Latrobe, The Rambler in North America, II, 232f.

<sup>37</sup>

Hildreth, Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains, III.



during time of war, were elevated to brevet ranks for courageous action. Some were fortunate enough, after the periods of war emergency, to use their officer experience as a lever by which a commission in the regular army could be obtained. <sup>38</sup>

Two major factors which determined unrest and dissatisfaction among enlisted and officer personnel alike were the meagre salary scale and the lack of opportunity for promotion. During the three decades prior to the Civil War, requests for salary increases went hand in hand with the general movement for increasing the size of the regular army. Gradually both goals were achieved, but only after much storm and protest. Increased strength was accomplished accidentally as a result of a series of particular military emergencies, viz., Indian uprisings and the Mexican War, after which the size of the standing army was reduced but never to a pre-emergency level. This expansion of the military establishment provided promotion opportunities for seasoned personnel whenever new regiments were authorized by Congress. <sup>39</sup>

Salary increases, on the other hand, came as a result of the realization that pecuniary inducements had to be offered to attract a better class of recruits, to stem the tide of desertion, and to pacify and maintain a group of trained officers. The outlook for the latter group was

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<sup>38</sup> Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary, I, passim.

<sup>39</sup> Supra., Ch. I, 2-3.

especially gloomy in 1830-31, when an attempt was made to economize on military spending by cutting officers' salaries and allowances. Representative William Drayton from South Carolina presented a bill which would have cut the respective salaries of all officers by twenty per cent and at the same time would have decreased their respective allowances for food, forage, and servants. The only ranks which might have benefited were surgeons and assistant surgeons, whose salaries on the proposed pay scale would have been twenty-five to thirty per cent higher than the 1830 level.<sup>40</sup>

By 1836, all officers' salaries had been increased about one hundred dollars a year. Surgeons and assistant surgeons received more liberal increases, chiefly as a result of the agitation of Surgeon General Joseph Lovell. For example, a surgeon in 1831 received about \$1,100 a year, while an assistant surgeon drew approximately \$970, including rations and allowances. In 1836 the surgeon's pay was increased to \$1,800, with an additional increment of \$300 for ten or more years' service. The assistant surgeons' pay scale had a greater range, viz. about \$1,100 as base pay, \$1,300 for men with five years' service, and over \$1,600 for men with ten or more years' active service.<sup>41</sup> Dragoon personnel received a larger annual salary than persons with

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<sup>40</sup>

American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 802f.

<sup>41</sup>

Loc. cit.; see also, American State Papers, Military Affairs, VI, 128f.

corresponding ranks in infantry, artillery, or ordnance units because of special allowances for one or more horses and forage. Generally speaking, however, the pay scales in any case were not abnormally high. Lieutenants received between \$900 and \$1,000, while colonels received between \$2,500 and \$2,800 a year. Brigadier Generals, however, drew about \$3,700 a year, including allowances for three servants and five horses.<sup>42</sup> By 1860 respective salaries were increased about twenty-five per cent, but, according to one authority, the rising cost of living on the frontier<sup>43</sup> offset the raise.

Enlisted men fared about the same during the period 1830-60. In 1830 a private received five dollars a month, plus clothing, food, and medical care. In 1838 his salary was raised to six dollars a month, and to eight dollars a month after two years' service. By 1860 the regular army private earned monthly between eleven and twelve dollars, the higher pay being the amount for dragoon and artillery personnel. During the same period, corporals' wages increased from seven to nine, and later to twelve dollars, sergeants', from eight to thirteen to seventeen, and sergeant majors', from ten to seventeen to twenty-one dollars a month. Musicians, blacksmiths, and artillery artificers

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<sup>42</sup>

Ibid., VI, 129f.

<sup>43</sup>

Bandel, Frontier Life in the Army, 106f.

received proportionately higher increases to their respective salaries, which usually were in the range between private and sergeant.<sup>44</sup> Ordinarily, officers and men were paid every second month. However, if the paymaster had to travel a great distance between departmental headquarters and the many isolated posts, six or more months often elapsed between pay periods.<sup>45</sup>

Officers occasionally would be awarded extra allowances for certain positions or duties, wherein additional responsibilities were involved. Through such a system, it was possible for junior and senior officers alike to surmount the difficulties in the way of promotion. Death and resignation, unfortunately, were the two normal occurrences by which vacancies developed and by which officers could expect promotion to permanent rank. Except when the strength of the army was increased, the numbers of officers given rank were governed by a rigid table of organization. However, a relative amount of hope and security was generated through the system of brevet ranks, that is to say a promotion of a temporary status until a permanent vacancy should occur. Brevets were conferred for two reasons - on one hand as recognition of ten or more years of meritorious service in one grade, and on the other, to meet a particular

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<sup>44</sup>Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 170.<sup>45</sup>Bandel, Frontier Life in the Army, 106.

emergency which might occur on the battlefield. In the latter case two possibilities were common. An officer could be rewarded with a promotion to a brevet rank for bravery and exemplary conduct, or he could be given a command position if a senior officer were killed or disabled. In such cases the individual would receive the salary and allowances for his brevet rank. For example, Colonel Mathew Arbuckle received the brevet rank of Brigadier General in 1830 for ten years' honorable service in one grade. In another situation, Lieutenant Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock was awarded the rank of Brevet Colonel for his courageous service during the Mexican War, but did not receive his permanent rank of colonel until 1851.<sup>46</sup>

Whenever an officer became permanent or acting company commander, he would be given a stipend of ten dollars a month in addition to his regular pay for the extra responsibility. Officers who served as company, regimental, or departmental adjutants received an extra \$120 a year in addition to their regular pay. Generals' aides, assistant quartermasters, and assistant commissaries of subsistence were given \$430 a year in addition to rank allowances, because of heavier responsibilities.<sup>47</sup> Post or regimental surgeons, despite regulations to the contrary, occasionally

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas H. S. Hamersly, (ed.), Complete Regular Army Register, 1779-1879 (Washington, 1880), 236; 512.

<sup>47</sup> American State Papers, Military Affairs, VI, 107.

engaged in private practices in treating non-military personnel who lived in areas adjacent to frontier posts. Army regulations were frequently interpreted by the Surgeon General in a rather loose fashion inasmuch as both Surgeon Generals Lovell and Lawson sympathized with the lot of the army physician. Dr. William Beaumont received special permission to practice privately when he was stationed at Fort Crawford, Fort Mackinac, and Jefferson Barracks, respectively. At St. Louis, near the latter post, Beaumont established so lucrative a practice, largely as a result of the fame which accompanied his pioneer work in physiology, that he accumulated enough property to be able to retire to private practice at an early stage of his military career.<sup>48</sup>

An officer who served as treasurer of the post fund usually was awarded a percentage of the total fund for his services. At Fort Gibson the position was rotated among the junior officers who served on the post council of administration. The amount awarded was never great, usually about four or five dollars a month, or about two and a half per cent of the post fund. In one instance an officer was paid as much as five per cent, but the actual cash equivalent was less than seven dollars.<sup>49</sup> When Fort Gibson was being

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<sup>48</sup> Jesse S. Myer, Life and Letters of Dr. William Beaumont (St. Louis, 1912), 211f; see also, Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 112.

<sup>49</sup> Post Journal, Fort Gibson, 1845-57, 31 December 1851; Fort Mackinac Post Council of Administration Book, 4 April 1842, Records of United States Army Commands, Department of the West, The National Archives.

repaired in 1840, officers who were engaged in superintending work parties were awarded two dollars and fifty cents a month for the extra-duty work.<sup>50</sup>

A number of officers supplemented their military incomes and at the same time developed retirement funds through real estate speculation and investment. Shortly after the size of the army was reduced in 1821 and all ranks were frozen, Zachary Taylor intimated to Quartermaster General Thomas S. Jesup that if his [Taylor's] private financial affairs were not so tenuous, he would immediately retire to civilian life.<sup>51</sup> About ten years later Colonel Taylor was visited at Fort Snelling by George Featherstonhaugh, a British geologist. The latter recorded that "Colonel T. called and sat an hour with me, conversing about the state of this part of the country.... Being a Virginian of independent fortune...he chooses to remain in the army only because he is attached to the profession...."<sup>52</sup> Evidently time had been kind to the Colonel or else Featherstonhaugh had been misled.

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Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 12 February 1840, Records of Army Commands, Dept. of West.

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Zachary Taylor to Thomas Jesup, 18 June 1821, MS. in Zachary Taylor Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

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George W. Featherstonhaugh, A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Sotar (London, 1847), I, 214.

But a decade later, the matter of insuring one's position still preyed on Taylor's mind. In a letter to Ethan Allen Hitchcock, Taylor advised the junior officer that because of the uncertain state of military life, "all officers should pay close attention" to private affairs so that an avenue of escape would be held open.<sup>53</sup> In a subsequent letter to his brother, Colonel Joseph Taylor, Zachary Taylor indicated that several newly acquired plantations were not doing as well as he had expected. The Mississippi River had overflowed its banks for two successive years, thus ruining many acres of sugar land.<sup>54</sup> As an indication of Taylor's "penurious" state, one need only glance at the will he drew up shortly before he joined his troops on the Rio Grande in 1846. His wife was to receive all property, the family home and other real estate, in Louisville, Kentucky, six lifetime slaves, and all bank stock. Richard Taylor, his only son, was to receive \$20,000 in cash and the Louisiana plantation. His elder daughter, Ann, who married Surgeon Richard C. Wood, was to receive \$15,000 and the remaining railroad stock. The youngest child, Mary Elizabeth, who later married Taylor's aide, Colonel William W.S. Bliss, was to benefit through the inheritance of \$11,000 from all plantation crops.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup>Zachary Taylor to Ethan Allen Hitchcock, 30 November 1841, Taylor Papers.

<sup>54</sup>Zachary Taylor to Joseph Taylor, 17 June 1843, ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Copy of Zachary Taylor's Will, 10 March 1846, ibid.



Less grandiose than the Taylor holdings, but nevertheless indicative of the foresightedness were the real estate holdings of Dr. William Beaumont. When stationed at Fort Crawford, the doctor purchased one hundred and forty acres near Prairie du Chien. He estimated that the land, house, and barn were worth over \$1,200 in 1833. He was later transferred to Fort Howard, where he purchased a city lot or two in the rapidly growing town of Green Bay. Later when stationed at Plattsburg, New York, Beaumont purchased the mortgages of two farms in the immediate vicinity. Upon resigning his commission in the early 1840's, he also had accumulated considerable land holdings in suburban St.<sup>56</sup> Louis.

When California was acquired after the war with Mexico, several army officers who had participated in the liberation movement resigned from the army to become leading civilians in the development of the state. Charles P. Stone became a banker and consultant engineer for a number of mining companies. William T. Sherman became a well known real estate entrepreneur in the San Francisco area. In this capacity, Sherman acted as agent and broker for several army officers, among whom was Colonel E. A. Hitchcock. Letters between the two reveal that Hitchcock had numerous investments

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<sup>56</sup> Myer, Life and Letters of Dr. William Beaumont, 208.

in San Francisco real estate, which increased in value as a result of the gold rush of the early 1850's.<sup>57</sup>

The opportunities for enlisted men to receive extra income were somewhat limited. Promotions for privates, corporals, and sergeants were just as nebulous and tenuous as for commissioned officers. As in the case of the latter group, enlisted men were required to await rewards by way of death, discharge or desertion of those in the next higher rank. There were moreover, a limited number of special opportunities for extra emoluments. If a man possessed a special skill, he might receive the additional pay of a musician, blacksmith, or mechanic rather than wait for advancement through the ranks.

Enlisted men at Fort Gibson were fortunate in that the post supported a bake house and library. A first class baker could earn eighteen cents a day as extra pay, while his assistant received only ten cents a day. The librarian, usually an enlisted man, was paid two dollars a month for a few extra hours of work per day. On one occasion an enlisted man earned three dollars a month as a part time school teacher at the post night school. These payments were appropriated from the post fund rather than paid through the

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William T. Sherman to Ethan Allen Hitchcock, 31 January 1850, MS. in Ethan Allen Hitchcock Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

army paymaster.<sup>58</sup> By 1857, a good baker was paid at the rate of forty cents a day, and his assistant at twenty-five cents a day. The wages of the post librarian, at the same time, increased from two to three dollars a month.<sup>59</sup>

Under certain conditions enlisted men also could be paid for extra-duty work such as wood cutting, haying, gardening, or making minor repairs to post buildings. The general regulations specified that troops could be employed for such non-military chores only if civilian laborers were not available. In order to qualify for additional compensation, men were required to engage in such work for ten or more days during a given month. For an eight hour work day during the winter, soldiers received fifty cents. In the summer months the men were paid at the rate of seventy-five cents a day,<sup>60</sup> inasmuch as the working hours were increased to ten.

In one instance, a sergeant and the regimental bugler earned extra money without selling army equipment or horses, as some of their comrades often did. Sergeant Percival Lowe, stationed at Fort Leavenworth in the late 1850's, gained

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<sup>58</sup>

Fort Gibson Post Journal, 20-31 October 1847; 31 December 1851, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>59</sup>

Ibid., 1 February 1857.

<sup>60</sup>

War Department, General Regulations for the Army of the United States (Washington, 1841), 43f; see also Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 12 February 1840, Records of Army Commands, Dept. of West.

access to the official report of a Lieutenant Stansbury who had made a map and a table of distances between key landmarks along the Oregon Trail.<sup>61</sup> Lowe made a number of copies of the report and, with the bugler's help, sold them as guide-books to travelers who passed near the fort. Lowe calculated that he and his partner each realized a profit of twenty-five dollars within a two week period.<sup>62</sup>

Desertion proved to be a problem common to most army commands, wherein attempts were made to carry out the multifold task of guarding the frontier with some efficiency. Most officers believed that there was a close connection between the low pay scale and the high rate of desertion among the enlisted personnel. In 1824 General Jacob Brown suggested that deserters had no severe punishment to fear, inasmuch as the death penalty and flogging had been abolished some years earlier. In a report to John C. Calhoun, the Secretary of War, General Brown proposed that one dollar a month should be withheld from every soldier's pay. If the man completed his enlistment and was given an honorable discharge, the total amount would be restored to the individual; otherwise, the entire sum would be forfeited.<sup>63</sup> Brown's

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The officer in question was probably Captain Howard Stansbury of the Topographical Engineers. See Heitman, Historical Register, I, 915.

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Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 43.

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American State Papers, Military Affairs, II, 701f.

proposal was never adopted, but appears to have had some merit.

In 1830 a new Secretary of War, John Eaton, re-emphasized the necessity for finding a solution to the problem of desertion. Eaton, unlike other analysts, saw more than one root to the matter. The reputation of the army, Eaton observed, was at a low level because of the habits and attitude of the rank and file; hence very few good recruits ever enlisted. Eaton urged recruiting officers to be more judicious in their selection of candidates or else forfeit their respective recruiting premiums whenever one of their enlistees deserted. In his annual report for 1830, Eaton outlined a remedial program for striking at the basic causes of desertion instead of restoring former harsh methods of maintaining discipline. The Secretary's proposals included a reduction in the term of enlistment from five to three years, payment of the enlistment bounty only after a recruit had completed several months of honorable service, and the removal of liquor from the daily ration.<sup>64</sup>

Colonel Roger Jones, Adjutant General, added his opinions to those of Eaton in pressing Congress for reform legislation. Jones suggested reducing the enlistment term to four years, increasing the enlisted man's pay, and establishing a uniform procedure for punishing deserters. Citing

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<sup>64</sup>

American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 285.

the period 1823-30 as an example, Jones pointed out that of the 5,600 men who deserted during that time, only 1,800 were apprehended and punished. In order to improve the condition of the army Jones proposed that all liquor be stopped from the soldiers' rations and that older men be selected and retained as company officers. Jones felt that the influence of seasoned leaders would improve the morale to some extent and perhaps discourage desertion.<sup>65</sup>

To support his argument for an increase in salary, the Adjutant General produced some figures which would jar any economy minded Congress. Between 1823 and 1831 over \$575,000 had been expended by the federal government in apprehending, punishing, and replacing deserters from the army. Moreover, a trend toward higher expenditures seemed to be indicated by a twenty-five per cent increase in costs during the latter three years of the period. As a corrective measure, Jones suggested that Congress should authorize liberal, graduated salary increases, which would increase army appropriations by about \$85,000 a year, but which might produce beneficial results over a period of years.<sup>66</sup>

James Hildreth, who enlisted as a dragoon private in 1833, believed that recruits became disillusioned with a

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<sup>65</sup>

Ibid., 288.

<sup>66</sup>

Ibid., 727.

sudden awakening to the realities of army life. Consequently, many deserted to avoid unpleasantness. Hildreth observed that life at Jefferson Barracks was considerably less rosy than the picture painted by recruiting officers: "Treatment was relatively harsh, no bunks in the barracks, cooking utensils,..were purchased from money donated by the men themselves. The guard house was continually filled, courts martial every day...."<sup>67</sup> While Hildreth was experiencing "life in the west," the practice of flogging captured deserters was restored. The sight of such flogging should have chilled the heart of any potential deserter. Late in 1833, Hildreth witnesses the punishment being meted out at Jefferson Barracks, "...the first six or eight lashes, although applied with force enough to make the blood flow copiously from the lacerated wounds, brought no sign of flinching, but as the subsequent strokes fell upon the wounded flesh, groans, and at length, piercing shrieks rent the air, and before the last blow had fallen, the unhappy man had sunk into a swoon." for the latter occasion the entire command had been drawn up in formation on the main parade ground.<sup>68</sup>

British travelers were quick to comment on the high desertion rate in the United States Army during the mid-

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<sup>67</sup> Hildreth, Dragoon Campaigns to the Rock Mountains, 44f.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 50.

nineteenth century. Charles Murray visited Fort Des Moines, Iowa, in 1835 and was informed that at this particular post the rate of desertion was the highest on the frontier.

Murray observed that escape was relatively easy on account of the proximity of the Des Moines River, where steamers passed frequently. As a possible cause of desertion, Murray suggested that the picture of dragoon life had been over-tinted by zealous recruiting officers and that the recruits, "...upon arriving at their respective stations...found a very different state of things; they were obliged to build their own barracks, store rooms, stables, etc.; to haul and cut wood, and perform a hundred other menial or mechanical offices, so repugnant to the prejudices of an American."<sup>69</sup>

Captain Frederick Marryat, a seasoned British traveler, believed that discipline in the American army was generally poor on account of the abandonment of corporal punishment, except in the case of punishing deserters. Rather gleefully, Marryat pointed out that there were some punishments worse than flogging. He noted that some officers required captured deserters to walk about the parade ground loaded with a sixty pound knapsack for periods of three hours in every four for as many as five or six days at a time. Others performed the same stint without packs, but shackled to an



equally heavy and cumbersome ball and chain. Only those deserters who were discharged received the multiple punishment. After the prescribed fifty lashes, the culprit's head was shaved, and he was drummed out of the service at the business end of a bayonet.<sup>70</sup>

In some cases, good behaviour and the shortage of manpower brought an amelioration of a court martial sentence. In 1849 at Fort Gibson, General William G. Belknap recommended pardons for four deserters who had served a part of their respective sentences. A military court had sentenced each: (1) to reimburse the United States for the expense of his apprehension, roughly thirty dollars; (2) to forfeit all pay and allowances, except for debts due the sutler and laundress; (3) to be confined at hard labor for six months, with legs shackled; (4) to receive, at the expiration of confinement, fifty lashes on the bare back; (5) to be branded on the left hip with a letter "D" one and one-half inches high; (6) head shaved bare; (7) and to be drummed out of the service. In accordance with General Belknap's recommendation, the last four provisions were remitted to allow the men to return to active duty. Belknap had based his recommendation on the prisoners' good behavior and a pressing manpower shortage at Fort Gibson.<sup>71</sup>

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Marryat, A Diary in America, II, 306f.

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General W. G. Belknap to Lieutenant F.F. Flint, 24 October 1849, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

Despite the restoration of corporal punishment and a series of reforms in regard to army pay, enlistment bounties, and terms of enlistment, men continued to desert, especially during the 1850's when the gold bug infected even the most loyal soldier. Henry Coke, a British adventurer, stopped at Fort Laramie on his way to California in 1850 and while there he observed that as many as eighteen men deserted in one day, taking with them the best horses and equipment. Although a party was dispatched to overtake them, Coke reckoned that the odds were in favor of the deserters, especially if the police party should decide to kill their commanding officer and join the fugitives.<sup>72</sup> Sergeant Percival Lowe recollected that a number of well-liked, experienced soldiers deserted from Fort Leavenworth in 1851 on the first pay day after the summers' campaign. Several others followed the same course later when the regiment lay idle in winter quarters. Evidently, boredom and the westward fever combined to urge these men to drastic steps by joining the thousands of gold seekers in California.<sup>73</sup>

Military policies of a minor nature, buttressed by procedures and rules for every conceivable aspect of army life, were set forth in successive editions of the General

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<sup>72</sup> Henry J. Coke, A Ride over the Rocky Mountains to Oregon and California (London, 1852), 156.

<sup>73</sup> Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 100f.

Regulations. Included also were the Articles of War, which were the basis of military law during times of peace as well as war. Supplementary instructions were issued from time to time in the form of special orders by all levels of army commands from the Department of War to the smallest company unit. Through a rigid chain of command, discipline was maintained as effectively as possible wherever troops were gathered. Every officer and enlisted man had his particular job and responsibility, and negligence on anyone's part could bring disciplinary action, even to the extent of court martial proceedings.

Most commanding officers were able to cope with ordinary situations in their daily contact with fellow officers and men. Some leaders, such as Colonel Stephen W. Kearny, attained reputations as fair but severe disciplinarians and able commanders. For major infractions of military law, courts martial were convened to dispense justice in a military manner. All officers, including surgeons, were liable for such duty and were required at times to travel many miles to serve as court officers, plaintiffs, or witnesses. Desertion, drunkenness, and insubordination were the most common crimes dealt with by military courts. Drunkenness was of major concern as a health and morale problem in most commands and was punished in a variety of ways. As indicated in Chapter VIII, intemperance was believed to be the parent

of most other disorders. Removal of the source of trouble was not always a complete cure, for most alcoholics knew dozens of ways and means of acquiring liquor.

At Fort Towson in the 1830's, Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Vose maintained a rigid policy of confining drunkards to the guard house, even if they were not on duty. Those found drunk while on duty in Vose's command experienced long periods of confinement and forfeiture of pay, while off-duty personnel remained in the guard house only long enough to regain some degree of sobriety.<sup>74</sup> In 1845 a military court at Fort Snelling sentenced a musician to confinement at hard labor for one month, as well as forfeiture of six dollars of his pay. The man had been charged with drunkenness and unsoldierlike conduct during duty hours, which in a musical organization must have been amusing.<sup>75</sup>

In one case the policy of obtaining a conviction through guilt by association appears to have been in practice. At Fort Leavenworth in 1847, Private Michael Haggerty was charged, by a court martial, with the "possession of a gallon of spiritous liquor (more or less)...." Haggerty, although not intoxicated, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to walking around the parade ground two hours on and two hours off, day

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Lieutenant Colonel J. Vose to Lieutenant B.L.E. Bonneville, 10 March 1838, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

75

General Order No. 45, Fort Snelling, 15 June 1845, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

and night for six days; to nine days of hard labor; and to forfeit three dollars of his pay for one month. <sup>76</sup> An impasse arose at Fort Washita in the case of Private James Butler, who had been sentenced to spend alternate months in a dark hole, where his only subsistence would be bread and water. His crimes had been drunkenness and insubordination. However, when the time arrived for carrying out the sentence, Butler's commanding officer, Captain Enoch Steen, wrote to departmental headquarters to report that Fort Washita's facilities did not include a dark hole or a black pit. Steen asked if one should be constructed for the occasion or could the sentence be changed without calling a new court into session. Steen was later informed that he might handle the case as he saw fit -- but in keeping with the current policies of discourag-  
<sup>77</sup>ing intemperance.

Like civilian courts in frontier areas, military courts convened periodically at centrally located posts to hear a series of cases of varying degrees of seriousness. One common complaint with which military courts dealt was that which arose when junior officers were given temporary commands and, by chance, were placed in a higher position than a senior officer. For example, Second Lieutenant

<sup>76</sup>  
General Order No. 8, Fort Leavenworth, 26 February 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

<sup>77</sup>  
Captain C. Steen to Captain J. H. Prentiss, 14 October 1845 and endorsement, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

William Heth was given temporary command of Fort Washita in 1851 while other officers were absent on courts martial, furlough, and patrol. Because of a shortage of enlisted men at this time, Heth requested Assistant Surgeon Elisha Langworthy, who held the rank of Captain, to refrain from admitting borderline cases to the post hospital on account of real or alleged illnesses. Langworthy was rather nettled; in effect he replied that no "green second lieutenant" should give him such orders, especially when his professional competence was being questioned. Lieutenant Heth was equally provoked that his orders were ignored and his position of authority was thwarted. Matters came to a head quickly when Heth charged Langworthy with insubordination, neglect of duty, embezzlement of government property (i.e. hospital brandy), and drunkenness while on duty. Langworthy duly apologized to Heth who retracted the charges and resumed his position of anonymity as a second lieutenant.

Frequently there was an intermediate proceeding which eliminated a great number of formal courts martial. A board of arbitration could be assembled at the request of one or more parties to a dispute, thus saving the delay and expense of punitive action. Such a board was assembled at Fort Towson in 1845 to hear the complaint of Mr. George C. Gooding

against Lieutenant Thomas Monroe. The latter had contracted a considerable debt at Gooding's sutler store and had refused to settle his account. A series of violent quarrels had ensued in which each party hurled threats and abusive language at the other. At a closed hearing before the board, each party agreed to retract his respective insults, and Lieutenant Monroe agreed to pay his debt.

A trifling affair involving the ownership of a dog almost resulted in court martial proceedings. In the spring of 1841 at Fort Gibson, the hunting dog of Lieutenant Seneca Simmons had a litter, upon which occasion Simmons promised a particular pup to Lieutenant Edward G. Elliott. The dog was left with its mother until weaning time. Meanwhile, a complication arose while Simmons was absent from the post one day. A Lieutenant Porter entered Simmons' quarters and, without permission, took one of the pups--, the very one which Elliott alleged belonged to him. Porter refused to acknowledge any guilt or to return the dog, whereupon Elliott requested their commanding officer, Colonel Alexander Cummings to intervene. When no satisfaction was obtained, Elliott initiated court martial proceedings by issuing a formal complaint against Porter, charging him with violation of the Eighty-Third Article of War -- various crimes including

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79  
 Colonel G. Loomis to Lieutenant F.F. Flint, 11 December 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

housebreaking, robbery, and perjury. Porter became alarmed at the trend of events and agreed to return the dog. In doing so he indicated that the entire affair was ungentlemanly and unwarranted since neither he nor Simmons could distinguish the identity of a number of dogs which bore similar<sup>80</sup> markings.

Occasionally, more serious events precipitated severe legal action by army courts. At Fort Winnebago in 1833, an enlisted man, confined to the guard house on account of intemperance, inquired of the officer of the guard, who also was his company commander, the reasons for his imprisonment. When the officer gave a vague answer, the soldier became enraged, seized a guard's musket, and killed the officer. After a new trial, the unhappy fellow was sentenced to be<sup>81</sup> hanged for his crime.

The proximity of Fort Gibson to Cherokee settlements led to a number of disorders, including a killing or two. In one case Lieutenant Charles Wickliffe became enamored of a civilian carpenter's Cherokee mistress. When the carpenter discovered the situation, he beat the woman, who sought revenge by asking Wickliffe to whip her consort. Wickliffe

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<sup>80</sup>  
Lieutenant E.G. Elliott to Colonel A. Cummings, 6 March 1841; 2 April 1841; Lieutenant J. Porter to Colonel A. Cummings, 30 April 1841, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

<sup>81</sup>  
Kinzie, Wau-Bun, 506f.



gallantly obliged, using a raw hide whip. He went a step further, however, by concealing himself near the couple's house. He then called to the man to step outside, and when the fellow obliged, Wickliffe blasted at him with a shot gun. When the carpenter died, Wickliffe was called before a military court. The relatively light sentence of dismissal from the service was imposed; Wickliffe returned to his native state of Kentucky and reentered the service as a volunteer officer during the Mexican War.

Regardless of the exciting punctuations, daily life at frontier posts went on relentlessly. The small station complements engaged in a myriad of activities directly or indirectly connected with their respective missions on the western frontier. General military policy, the distribution of troops, and the interaction of military personnel all revolved about particular orb1, the forts per se. As frontier communities, they were homes and havens of refuge for men who were miles from civilization. Physical environment was as important to nineteenth century men as it is to contemporary humans, hence garrison life must be described in relation to the frontier post as a physical and geographical entity.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PHYSICAL PLANT

There would seem to be a peculiar sameness about all army posts, as, perhaps, any contemporary recruit might testify. Yet no two forts are really identical in appearance because of the regional differences in topography, in building materials, or in the eccentricities of the engineering officer. Except for a general rectangular shape, most frontier forts of the nineteenth century were amorphous blurs on the landscape. Some sprawled, some crouched, some appeared majestic, some atrophied, and some merely sat. The frontier post also meant different things to different men. To the average soldier, the post was a relatively comfortable home and haven; to the officers, a successful engineering accomplishment; to the Inspector Generals, a military miscarriage; to the Indian, a symbol of national authority; and to the American traveler, a welcomed oasis.

The foreign visitor was confused by the illogicality of the term "Fort," because he expected an awe inspiring

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<sup>1</sup> Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 117.

structure. He envisioned the typical European stronghold, behind whose masonry a tiny garrison could withstand an indefinite period of siege warfare. Sir Richard Burton, a seasoned British traveler, made the following observation of the western defenses in the late 1850's:

Every square box or block-house in these regions is a fort; no misnomer, however, can be more complete than the word applied to the military cantonments on the frontier.... The quarters are of various styles; some with their low verandas, resemble Anglo-Indian bungalows or comfortable farm houses; others are storied houses, with the 'stoops' or porch of the eastern states in front; and low, long, peak-roofed tenements are used for magazines and out-houses.... Had these cantonments a few more trees and far more brilliant verdure, they would suggest the idea of an out station in Guzerat, the Decan, or some similar Botany Bay for decayed gentlemen who transport themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Captain Frederick Marryat was similarly impressed with American fortresses when he visited Fort Crawford in 1837. He observed that "the fort at the prairie [Prairie du Chien<sup>7</sup>] like most other American outposts, a mere inclosure, intended to repel attacks of Indians; but it is large and commodious...."<sup>3</sup>

Whether a "mere inclosure" or a "square box," almost every frontier post could claim individuality on one hand and standard form on the other. Because of the military milieu, a minimum of standardization was essential. Since

<sup>2</sup> Burton, City of Saints, 41.

<sup>3</sup> Marryat, A Diary in America, II, 68f.

frontier defense was the basic reason for existence, a square or rectangular formation of major buildings was deemed the most efficient and expedient form of construction. Barracks, officers' quarters, commissary rooms, and offices were built in a tight or open square to face the parade ground. The parade, usually about 700 by 800 feet, was the center of military activities. In the shadow of the central flagstaff, there were held morning roll call, the assignment of duties, guard mount, retreat ceremonies, parades, and other formations signaling the arrival and departure of scouting or patrol parties. On the parade the recruit learned the basic movements of squad, company, and regimental drill. Around the area marched the repentent drunkard or insubordinate, looking much like a dromedary, with a pack loaded with artillery ammunition. By the flag pole, the deserter was flogged, branded, and drummed out of the service, and on Saturday or Sunday morning the entire command would stand in sparkling array for the weekly inspection by the commanding officer.<sup>4</sup>

Buildings used for barracks differed considerably from post to post according to the available building materials, the size of the command, and the expected longevity of the post. Fort Smith, Arkansas, was reconstructed in 1849

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<sup>4</sup> Brooks and Reeve, (eds.), Forts and Forays, 40; see also Hildreth, Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains, 50. 50

with the intention of its being a permanent post. Consequently quarters for both officers and men were built of stone, which was found in abundance in the area. Moreover, the buildings were erected on a more grandiose scale than before -- 40 by 100 feet, two stories high, and roofed with slate.<sup>5</sup> Fort Wayne, on the other hand, was built with the idea of a short life expectancy. From its inception in 1840, its utility as a frontier station on the Illinois River in the Cherokee Nation was seriously questioned. Consequently, all buildings were of frame construction with crude wooden planking for the sides and roofs. Two large, two-story structures were built for dragoon quarters but were used for store houses, while the troops were housed in floorless,<sup>6</sup> crude wooden huts.

More durable buildings were erected at Fort Arbuckle, Choctaw Nation, in 1851. While officers and troops were temporarily quartered in tents, the post quadrangle was laid out with the enlisted men's barracks on opposite long sides. Officers' quarters and commissary store rooms faced each other on the short sides. The large barracks were made of hewn logs, with puncheon floors and clapboard roofs. Only

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<sup>5</sup> Grant Foreman, Marcy and the Gold Seekers (Norman, 1939), 95.

<sup>6</sup> Foreman, (ed.), A Traveller in Indian Territory, 77f.

the fireplaces and chimneys were of stone and clay.<sup>7</sup> Permanent buildings at Fort Leavenworth were begun in 1827 when frame buildings were being placed upon stone foundations. The main barracks were one-story buildings, 52 by 36 feet. The interior was laid out in a rectangular pattern with a central passage twelve feet wide, on either side of which were two rooms, each 20 by 18 feet. Company kitchens and messing facilities were located in the basement. Temporary quarters frequently supplemented frame buildings. For example, some troops at Fort Leavenworth were housed in a tremendous tent, 150 by 28 feet. It was divided into five rooms, each 30 by 28 feet. One room was reserved for the guard, while the other four served as soldiers' living and sleeping quarters. Kitchens and messing facilities were located nearby in separate buildings.<sup>8</sup>

In keeping with a rather rigid caste system, officers' quarters were located on the opposite side of the quadrangle or outside the confines of the post. Unmarried officers at Fort Leavenworth lived in an early day Bachelor Officers' Quarters, known affectionately as "Bedlam." It was a large two story frame building on a stone foundation with front

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<sup>7</sup> Rodney Glisan, Journal of Army Life (San Francisco, 1874), 81.

<sup>8</sup> Edward R. Dezurko, "A Report and Remarks on Cantonment Leavenworth," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, XV (November, 1947), 351.

and rear porches on the upper levels.<sup>9</sup> Apparently, Bedlam was planned as a one story building, 120 by 36 feet. But, when finally constructed, it was expanded to two floors above the basement level. There were four rooms, each 20 by 18 feet, adjoining two central hallways on the first and second floors. End rooms also opened on corridors which traversed the width of the buildings. Other officers were housed in a nearby log hut of about the same dimensions as the enlisted mens' shack. Most officers rooms were square cubicles 15 by 16 feet. Kitchen and dining areas for these officers were in separate, adjacent buildings.<sup>10</sup>

The commanding officers at Fort Leavenworth, however, had more spacious and more elaborate living quarters, consisting of a two story frame and stone building. On each floor were four centrally located rooms, and two rooms projecting from the ends of the building. Like soldiers' and officers' quarters, the kitchen was located in the basement.

At most posts, officers were housed in separate units which varied in size from two room huts to multi-room frame or brick houses. Junior officers, usually first and second lieutenants, frequently shared the two room cabins.

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<sup>9</sup>

Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 31.

<sup>10</sup>

DeZurko, "A Report and Remarks on Cantonment Leavenworth," 352.

<sup>11</sup>

Ibid., 353.

Officers of higher rank, especially those who had families, had much larger and separate quarters. Rank and marital status determined one's right to housing at all posts. Junior and bachelor officers could expect to be evicted from extensive, comparatively commodious units whenever a senior officer or one with a family arrived at a post. Dr. Rodney Glisan, while post surgeon at Fort Arbuckle in 1852, vacated his quarters for a lieutenant and his family. There being no available space, Glisan moved into a small room in the post hospital, where, after spending five years in comparative isolation on the frontier, he pondered on the boredom of a bachelor's solitude, but mixed with the cheerful hope of obtaining a leave of absence.<sup>12</sup>

At Fort Gibson, officers lived in cabins located on a hill which rose above the camp proper. Most units were two room wooden buildings with small kitchens attached to the rear. Occasionally, when living space was at a premium,<sup>13</sup> the kitchens would be used as additional living quarters. In one instance, Lieutenant E.K. Smith experienced difficulty when he lost his housing priority to a junior officer with a family. Smith appealed to General Mathew Arbuckle for a satisfactory adjustment, inasmuch as no suitable quarters were available. Smith pointed out that certain senior

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<sup>12</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 103f.

<sup>13</sup>

Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 1830-1860, 57f.



officers were without families, yet were housed in spacious three room cabins, and he became more provoked when certain captains and majors refused to share accommodations with him at the risk of losing their servants whom they were housing. General Arbuckle solved the dilemma by placing Smith in an unused commissary storeroom until such time as several officers should be transferred or replaced by junior<sup>14</sup> personnel.

Elsewhere, officers were quartered in wooden huts, tents, rock sheds, or adobe buildings. Officers stationed at Fort McKavett, Texas, in 1853 occupied one room stone units, which had been constructed as kitchens for larger field stone barracks which were then in the process of construction.<sup>15</sup> All military personnel stationed at or near Fort Jesup, Louisiana, during the winter of 1844-45 were quartered, like the Roman army, in small bark and log huts. The latter units had been erected to replace tents during the "watch-and-wait" period of diplomacy between the United States and Mexico. No permanent units were added to the

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Lieutenant E.K. Smith to General M. Arbuckle, 11 March 1840, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R. The officer referred to here is Ephraim Kirby Smith, who was eighteen years older than his more illustrious brother, Edmund. Ephraim was killed in the Mexican War, see Joseph H. Parks, General Edmund Kirby Smith, C.S.A. (Baton Rouge, 1954), 9; 63.

15

Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Freeman, Report of Inspection of the Eighth Military Department, 16 August 1853, Adjutant General's Office, File F 29.

garrison quadrangle because of the impending crisis in  
<sup>16</sup>  
 Texas. Dr. Rodney Glisan recorded in his journal that it  
 was the usual practice for troops and officers to be quartered  
 in a succession of tents, huts, and finally more durable  
 buildings or barracks. During the building of Fort Arbuckle  
 in 1851, Glisan spent most of his time under canvas, after  
 which he was awarded, like all other junior officers, a  
 single room. Captain Randolph B. Marcy rated a two-room  
 cabin, inasmuch as he was the commanding officer with his  
<sup>17</sup>  
 wife accompanying him.

Inspector Generals and travelers observed that the  
 most common type of temporary shelter was the army tent.  
 Under normal circumstances the tent was used while more  
 permanent housing was being constructed. At other times,  
 tents were used to shelter troops during periods of repair  
 or reconstruction of older units, or if the permanent site  
 or need for a military post remained undetermined for  
 several months. Traveling through Texas in 1853, Lieutenant  
 Colonel William G. Freeman observed that troops at Forts  
 Ewell and McIntosh were living in tents while plans for  
<sup>18</sup>  
 building were being made. Three years later, Colonel

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<sup>16</sup>  
 Grant, Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant, I, 35f.

<sup>17</sup>  
 Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 51.

<sup>18</sup>  
 Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Freeman, Report of Inspec-  
 tion of the Eighth Military Department, 11 June 1853; 22  
 July 1853.

Joseph K.F. Mansfield found the troops at the latter post still occupying tents while stone barracks were being constructed. Mansfield also noted, while inspecting Fort Duncan, Texas in May, 1856, that Sergeant Thomas Drury had solved a personal housing problem, with no expense to the government, by erecting a large rock dwelling for himself and his family near the garrison.<sup>19</sup>

When Sir Richard Burton visited Fort Scott, Utah, in 1857, he saw for the first time the Sibley tent, whose design was credited to Major Henry H. Sibley. The Sibley tent was a product of adapting to local climatic conditions and was based on invaluable Indian experiences. The tent was shaped like an inverted cone, the top of which rested on a single upright piece. The latter member did not reach to the ground but was supported by an iron tripod from which cooking utensils were suspended. Most officers found the Sibley tent ideal for winters in the North, but they preferred the regular wall tent for summer quarters wherein more space and better ventilation were provided.<sup>20</sup>

Occasionally it was necessary for officers to live beyond the post confines in non-military housing units. Officers and travelers in the vicinity of Fort Jesup, Louisiana, were cordially invited by Mr. A.W.P. Ussery to board at the

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<sup>19</sup> Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield, Report of Inspection, Department of Texas, 1856; 19-23 May 1856; 28-30 May 1856, A.G.O., Misc. File 282.

<sup>20</sup> Burton, The City of Saints, 87.

Fort Jesup Hotel. Ussery advertised in the Red River Gazette that not only could comfortable accommodations be had at his inn, but also the traveler would be entertained every morning and evening by the Fort Jesup military band, whose notes filled the air for miles around.<sup>21</sup> In 1842, Lieutenant Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock investigated Indian affairs in the Cherokee Nation where he had occasion to confer with the commanding officers at Forts Smith, Coffee, Gibson, and Wayne. At Forts Coffee and Wayne, Hitchcock was able to secure accommodations for eating and sleeping within the forts. However, at Forts Smith and Gibson, he found it necessary to secure room and board at inns adjacent to the garrison. Hitchcock preferred McDermot's Hotel near Fort Gibson to Captain Toger's Hotel near Fort Smith, inasmuch as the Captain did not serve breakfast until 9:00 A.M. which to Hitchcock was nothing short of torture.<sup>22</sup>

Overcrowded conditions at the larger western posts frequently forced younger officers to find accommodations away from the garrisons. In the fall of 1846, Jefferson Barracks became inundated with a flood of fresh second lieutenants and militia officers who were answering the call for the Mexican campaigns. Young Lieutenant George H.

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The Red River Gazette, August, 1837, cited in J. Fair Hardin, "Four Forgotten Frontier Army Posts of Western Louisiana," 676.

22

Foreman, (ed.), A Traveller in Indian Territory,

27.

Gordon arrived in October, 1846, but found older, senior officers, some with families, had absorbed all available housing at the post. He, therefore, solved his housing worries by joining a number of other junior officers at a nearby private home, where the young men were given room and board at reasonable rates.<sup>23</sup>

During post building programs also, adequate housing was at a premium. For example, two officers at Fort McIntosh, Texas, found conditions so crowded and unsatisfactory in 1853 that they invested their own funds in the construction of a rock house near the post. The story was passed along to departmental headquarters indicating the pressing need for additional construction at the fort and pointing out that most officers shared living accommodations with each other. Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Freeman recommended that priority should be given to an accelerated building program for soldiers' barracks inasmuch as the latter had been occupying tents for a considerable length of time.<sup>24</sup>

The fourth side of the post square normally accommodated the store rooms and offices for quartermaster and

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Lieutenant G.H. Gordon to Mrs. E.L.C. Gordon, 17 October, 1846, MS. in George Henry Gordon Papers, 1842-1860, Massachusetts Historical Society Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

24

Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Freeman, Report of Inspection, 1853; Fort McIntosh, 22 July 1853.

commissary supplies. Since the average frontier post was established primarily as a defense unit, the central location of military stores and equipment, food supplies, and clothing was considered essential by engineering officers. The location was also convenient for the more efficient handling of the daily clerical and administrative work relative to the existence of the western posts. Store rooms and offices generally were one story wood or stone buildings of the same size and shape as living quarters.<sup>25</sup> At Fort Leavenworth during the 1830's, quartermaster and commissary stores were housed in a common building, 138 feet by 128 feet, which corresponded in size to the officers' quarters. Surplus supplies were stored in an adjacent hut, about one third the square footage of the main warehouse.<sup>26</sup>

If a post survived the first three years of life, it was generally considered strategically sound. Thereafter, it usually grew by leaps and bounds until the adjacent area was littered with a collection of storerooms, work rooms, and officers' quarters. The post hospital was normally one of the first buildings to be constructed outside the quadrangle. The dimensions of hospitals varied with sizes and functions of different posts. Garrisons of less than

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<sup>25</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 81.

<sup>26</sup>

DeZurko, "A Report and Remarks on Cantonment Leavenworth," 352.

one hundred men used a typical one story, four room building, while larger station complements required proportionately larger facilities. However, unlike the construction of twentieth century community hospitals, no rule of thumb was available to predict the advent of epidemics or accidents. The garrison at Fort Leavenworth frequently varied from 100 to 300 or more men, but, happily, an adequate hospital was erected with the original buildings. Situated apart from the other wood and stone buildings, the post hospital was a two story structure, 64 by 36, with four rooms on each floor and a kitchen and dining area in the basement.<sup>27</sup>

At Fort Arbuckle, Dr. Rodney Glisan and his stewards occupied a one story, four room log cabin, which was located a respectable distance from the main post. Apparently there was a prevalent suspicion that most human diseases were in some way communicable and that isolation in many instances might improve the health of the command.<sup>28</sup> The original two room hospital at Fort Gibson was so small that it was frequently necessary to enlarge it, especially when a rash of winter and summer fevers struck the garrison. During the summer of 1832, the original structure was supplemented by two wings, each 124 feet long.<sup>29</sup> Six years later, during

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 353.<sup>28</sup>Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 82.<sup>29</sup>Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 40.

the spring and summer of 1838, two additional buildings were erected as a result of widespread illness and a general increase in the numbers of infantry and dragoon troops.<sup>30</sup>

Constant daily fatigue duty under adverse climatic conditions sapped the strength of many enlisted men so that the early construction of a hospital was of prime importance. General Henry Atkinson was advised of this problem in 1830 by Colonel Willoughby T. Morgan, who was in command of the garrison at Fort Crawford. Morgan thankfully reported that quarters for enlisted men and officers had been completed, together with a hospital unit, and that his work crews had been so engaged for over a year. He concluded that if his command managed to stay on its feet and out of the hospital, the entire building program should be completed before another year had passed.<sup>31</sup>

Another group of buildings of some importance, yet located outside the main compound, was the sutler's store and supply sheds. While not an official military part of garrison life, the sutler was given a place of convenience and importance just beyond the walls because of his presence as a morale factor. Army regulations allowed commanding officers to permit a post or regimental sutler to use an

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<sup>30</sup>

Ibid., 56.

<sup>31</sup>

Colonel W. T. Morgan to General H. Atkinson, 18 July 1830, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.



unoccupied building or tent. However, in most cases, conditions were so crowded that sutlers constructed their own facilities on the military reservation adjacent to the post proper. At Fort Leavenworth, the post sutler built two sheds, about 40 by 18, some distance to the rear of the main buildings of the post.<sup>32</sup> The sutler at Fort Atkinson, Iowa, occupied a two story dwelling and a sizeable store, at the rear of which he operated a billiard room for the troops.<sup>33</sup> At other military posts too, such as Fort Gibson and Fort Coffee, the sutlers' buildings occupied prominent places near the barracks and officers' quarters.<sup>34</sup>

As posts attained some degree of permanence, despite their crude appearances, additional quartermaster sheds, commissary storehouses, and living quarters were constructed outside the quadrangle, yet within the reservation. Officers with families usually vacated smaller accommodations within the stockade in favor of more spacious facilities in the immediate vicinity. Also with a state of permanence came increased attempts toward self-sufficiency. Civilian workers were a common feature at many western posts, consequently the construction of additional houses and sheds became

<sup>32</sup>  
DeZurko, "A Report and Remarks on Cantonment Leavenworth," 352.

<sup>33</sup>  
Edgar B. Wesley, "Life at a Frontier Post," The Journal of the American Military Institute, III (Winter, 1939), 204.

<sup>34</sup>  
Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 30; 40.

necessary. Laundresses, blacksmiths, farmers, drovers, butchers, and others were given the right to occupy or construct facilities for themselves and their families on the military reservations, thus considerably expanding the military community into something which closely resembled a small town.

A surprising number of processing units were operated by civilian and military personnel to contribute to the maintenance of the post. Since many forts were expanded after the first year's operation, building facilities occupied a considerable portion of extra garrison space. Within sight of the flagstaff were brick kilns, board kilns, grist mills, saw mills, dairies, bake houses, and quarry operations.<sup>35</sup>

At dragoon posts especially, the stable area occupied a place of importance in the immediate vicinity of the garrison. Stables, corrals, corn and fodder bins were usually completed long before officers' and enlisted men's quarters were begun.<sup>36</sup>

Military posts which were adjacent to Indian Agencies generally had the added chore of constructing and maintaining Indian Council Houses, which were often used to greater advantage as theatres or chapels than as places for military-Indian meetings; at least such seemed to be the case at

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<sup>35</sup> Wesley, "Life at a Frontier Post," 203; see also DeZurko, "A Report and Remarks on Cantonment Leavenworth," 352f.

<sup>36</sup> Hildreth, Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains,  
16.

Fort Gibson, where soldiers of an artistic temperament gathered to amuse themselves and their companions with plays and dancing.<sup>37</sup> Other miscellaneous units included chapels, school rooms, library reading rooms, chaplains quarters, ice houses, and an assortment of privies. It is not surprising then that a number of army posts did become civil communities.

American and foreign travelers gave somewhat idyllic descriptions of average western forts from which some image or impression of the overall effect can be gleaned. Henry Schoolcraft, pioneer geologist of the Northwest, described Fort Howard as "situated on a handsome grassy plain, on the north side of the Fox River.... It consists of a range of log barracks facing three sides of a square parade ground and surrounded by a stockade of timber thirty-five feet high, with block houses at the angles. The whole is whitewashed, and presents a neat military appearance."<sup>38</sup> Schoolcraft also visited Fort Snelling in 1832, and observed that "the post is located at the junction of the St. Peters with the Mississippi. It stands on a high bluff, rising on the north nearly 300 feet above the water. The walls of the fort and most of the buildings are of stone. The tower commands an

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<sup>37</sup>

Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 134n.

<sup>38</sup>

Henry R. Schoolcraft, Narrative Journal of Travels Through the Northwestern Regions of the United States, M.L. Williams, (ed.), (East Lansing, 1953), 242.

extensive and beautiful view of the adjacent country."<sup>39</sup>

Washington Irving and Henry Ellsworth commented on the appearance of the sight of Fort Gibson at a distance across the Neosho River from whence they approached the post in 1832. Irving merely noted in his journal that the fortifications had a neat white appearance and that Colonel Mathew Arbuckle lived in a log house.<sup>40</sup> Ellsworth was more reserved when he recorded that "the buildings upon inspection appear to be fast going to decay, having been erected several years ago, and constructed of materials not durable when exposed to weather."<sup>41</sup>

John Hawkins Clark, a prospective California miner, describes Fort Kearny, Nebraska, as he trekked westward in the early 1850's as follows: "Fort Kearny lies five miles from our camp, and while marching toward it this morning it presented quite an interesting appearance; but, on a near approach, the charm we felt on first seeing it gradually faded, and when we arrived on the spot, found instead of clean looking buildings a number of rusty looking houses without paint or white wash."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> W. T. Boutwell, "Schoolcraft's Exploring Tour of 1832," Collections of the State Historical Society of Minnesota, I (1902), 121f.

<sup>40</sup> John Francis McDermott, (ed.), The Western Journals of Washington Irving (Norman, 1945), 111.

<sup>41</sup> Henry L. Ellsworth, Washington Irving on the Prairies, Stanley T. Williams and Barbara D. Simison, (eds.) New York, 1937, 2ff.

<sup>42</sup> Louise Barry, "Overland to the Gold Fields of California in 1852," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, X (August, 1942), 242.

The matters of selecting a site and constructing a military post in the western wilderness proved to be two of the greatest hurdles in establishing the frontier defense system. Once the general location had been decided upon, the War Department deposited the chore in the lap of some enterprising officer in the West. A particular site was selected for its proximity to a water supply, adequate building materials, a fuel supply, good soil for forage and food crops, and, if possible, a means of river transportation. In following the development of this pattern, the reports and work of Lieutenant Daniel P. Woodbury offer an excellent example of how a typical frontier post, such as Fort Kearny, Nebraska, was planted in the midst of nowhere.

During the closing months of the Mexican War, Lieutenant Woodbury and a party of soldiers set out from Fort Kearny, Missouri, to conduct a survey of locations for prospective military posts on the overland route to Oregon. The government's general plan was to erect way stations to aid and encourage the settlement of the Oregon Territory and the west coast. In November, 1847, a suitable site for one such post was located at Grande Island on the Platte River. Grande Island was about 317 miles west of Independence, Missouri, the main "jumping off" place for westbound pioneers, and about 300 miles northwest of Fort Leavenworth, the nearest military supply depot. The Grande Island site was on a hard,

dry piece of bottom land. Nearby was a safe water supply and several stands of wood for fuel and building material.<sup>43</sup>

Further investigation revealed that the site did have a few disadvantages, however. Cottonwood was the only tree available in great quantities and, even those trees were rather scrubby. Other trees such as ash, elm, cedar, and willow were generally too few in number to be of much use. Woodbury estimated that the longest common dimension for cutting logs and planks would be twenty feet for easy handling. Despite intermittent deposits of clay and gravel, it was discovered that the soil of the Platte River bed and bottoms was too sandy for making good bricks. However, several miles west of the site, Woodbury located "a deep, extensive stratum of which common bricks of medium quality" could probably be made.<sup>44</sup>

Woodbury recommended that additional materials might be obtained from abandoned Fort Kearny, Missouri, where he saw an adequate supply of ready made doors, window sashes, shingles, pine boards and hardware.<sup>45</sup> Otherwise, the idea of using timber for construction was abandoned except for

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<sup>43</sup>  
Lieutenant D. P. Woodbury to General J. Totten, 10 November 1847, Typed MS. in Nebraska State Historical Society Library.

<sup>44</sup>  
Lieutenant D. P. Woodbury to General J. Totten, 10 November 1847, Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>  
Woodbury to Totten, 2 March 1848, Ibid.

rough framing purposes. During June and July, 1848, twenty men were employed in moulding and burning bricks, sixty others were moulding adobe bricks, and twenty were building a sod stable whose roof was boarded and covered with rammed earth blocks. Other men, soldiers and civilians, were engaged in hauling timber, operating a saw mill, and working as masons with brick and adobe. Woodbury estimated that his brick kiln could turn out 60,000 bricks in a two month<sup>46</sup> period.

A food supply was considered next in importance to building materials, and presented the further difficulty of hauling the basic commissary stores overland from Fort Leavenworth. The fertility of the soil along the Platte River was somewhat inferior to that found along the Missouri River. However, Woodbury reckoned that the local soil would be of sufficient quality to support agriculture for the needs of the garrison and any settlers who might contract to furnish supplies. So pressing was the need for planning for supplies of food and forage that the War Department was advised, as early as the fall of 1847, to employ farmers to plant and cultivate crops and forage in advance of the arrival of the post's garrison. To accomplish this purpose Woodbury recommended hiring a group of Mormon farmers who had been forced to delay their search for the promised land on account of

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<sup>46</sup>Woodbury to Totten, 2 August 1848, Ibid.

traveling funds. In fact, he had earlier sounded out several Mormon elders, and had received their assurance that in March, 1848, they would be ready to begin farming operations at Grande Island.<sup>47</sup>

The post at Grande Island in the present state of Nebraska was eventually designated Fort Kearny, and at the same time the old post near the Missouri border was officially abandoned. To supplement the new post, Woodbury advised building or acquiring another permanent post on the Oregon Trail to provide wayside inns and to establish a modicum of tranquility among the Pawnee and Sioux, who were the most troublesome of the northern tribes. To further the program, Congress was petitioned for a \$15,000 appropriation for materials and labor, for, warned Woodbury, the posts "must not only be strong within themselves, but [should] contain ample storerooms for subsistence, forage and amunition...."<sup>48</sup>

One of the critical problems encountered by all military commanders and engineering officers in construction was the maintenance of a constant supply of manpower to complete a project in as short a period of time as possible. The working season was relatively short, especially in northern commands. Quite naturally, the basic source of all manpower was the troops themselves. However, because of necessary

<sup>47</sup> Woodbury to Totten, 10 November 1847, Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Woodbury to Totten, 9 December 1847, Ibid.



military duties, expeditions, wars, and illnesses, troops were often supplemented by skilled and unskilled civilians. In some instances, the military personnel was replaced entirely by civilian workers. The engineering officer at Fort Gibson in 1837 was very fortunate that his need for skilled workers coincided with the arrival of a regiment of recruits from New York City, where many unemployed tradesmen had enlisted to solve their own desperate needs owing to the panic of 1837. Even those who had not been trained in the building trades found a niche for themselves by adapting to the demands for teamsters, ditch diggers, cooks, bakers, and clerks.<sup>49</sup>

During the initial stages of construction at Camp Kearny, Missouri, Colonel S.W. Kearny was not so fortunate. He complained to the Adjutant General that his command was constantly being reduced by the transfer of troops to Fort Leavenworth and Texas. In May, 1846, he had only thirty-one enlisted men, some of whom were on sick report, and seven civilian mechanics with which to complete all buildings, defenses, and to furnish a normal camp guard.<sup>50</sup> The problem was shelved temporarily in June, 1846, when all work was suspended by the War Department.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup>

Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 50.

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Colonel S.W. Kearny to General R. Jones, 30 May 1846, typed M.S. in Nebraska State Historical Society Library.

<sup>51</sup>

Colonel S. W. Kearny to General R. Jones, 22 June 1846, Ibid.

Lieutenant Woodbury was faced with a similar problem as he initiated construction of the second Fort Kearny at Grand Island, at a time when trained regulars and civilians were scarce because of the Mexican War. He, therefore, turned to volunteer troops, of whom he wrote, "the Missouri volunteers will compare favorably with any other volunteers in the service. They will not object to do a little work, but they will not in any reasonable time do all that must be done. Even if the volunteer should be willing to work, the greater part of this appropriation [~~\$~~15,000] will still be necessary for the purchase of tools and machinery, and the employment of mechanics and master workmen."<sup>52</sup>

In addition to the unpredictable weather, during which time operations on adobe and "rammed" earth structures were suspended, the men engaged in construction occasionally balked. After a series of rain storms in the spring of 1848, Woodbury's men received word of the end of the Mexican War, which meant termination of service for many volunteers. Such news to the Missouri volunteers was heartening, but very discouraging to the engineering officer. During the fall and winter of 1848, a few remaining volunteers and a number of hired workmen completed temporary quarters and a sod store house before the arrival of cold weather. Early in December, stables, adobe storehouses, and additional quarters

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<sup>52</sup>

Lieutenant D.P. Woodbury to Colonel J. Totten, 9 December 1847, Ibid.

were erected and several crews were assigned the winter task of cutting and hauling timber for the following year's operations. In order to rebuild his forces, Woodbury wintered in St. Louis to contract for additional mechanics and to purchase new materials.<sup>53</sup>

During the summer of 1849, the second link in the military chain on the Oregon Trail was added when Woodbury and Major Winslow F. Sanderson arranged for the purchase of Fort Laramie from the American Fur Company. Congress appropriated an additional sum for remodeling the old fort, and during 1849 and 1850 Woodbury commuted between Forts Kearny and Laramie to superintend construction.<sup>54</sup> In September, 1849, enough regulars and civilian craftsmen had arrived at Fort Laramie so that new officers quarters, storehouses, and a new bake house were started. Some soldiers and civilians were engaged at the stone quarry and the saw mill, while others were employed as carpenters, masons, and brick kiln workers.<sup>55</sup>

At Fort Kearny building almost came to a standstill during the winter of 1850 when the costs of maintenance and construction practically exhausted the Congressional appropriation. It became necessary to send men and teams farther

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<sup>53</sup>  
Lieutenant D.P. Woodbury to Colonel J. Totten,  
7 December 1848, Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>  
Woodbury to Totten, 26 June 1849, Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>  
Woodbury to Totten, 7 September 1849, Ibid.

from the military reservation to procure good timber. Travel conditions, moreover, became almost impossible during the spring on account of high water. Cottonwood was still available within a ten mile radius, but was very difficult to saw properly. It was so hard, in fact, that the saw mill, which incidentally was procured after much redtape, stood idle most of the winter because new blades and parts could not be obtained. Lime deposits for masonry work were available locally, but only in the broadest sense of the term; that is, within a range of 100 miles. Shingles, lathing, flooring, doors, and windows were transported by river steamer from St. Louis "at the enormous expense of \$200 a thousand board feet for lumber...." A final blow fell when the Mormons departed after a season of nominal success. Thereafter it became increasingly difficult to find someone to settle in the region to farm on a contract basis. The only alternative appeared to haul forage and corn from Missouri, which would cost the government thirty dollars a month to feed each animal.<sup>56</sup>

Woodbury's last report on Forts Laramie and Kearny indicated a rather bleak future in regard to procuring building supplies and food. Timber resources were dwindling rapidly within a twenty-five mile radius of each post. Rammed

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<sup>56</sup>  
Ibid. Woodbury to General R. Jones, 14 February 1850,

earth blocks, adobe, and brick proved to be practical substitutes, but rain and snow so often interfered with their manufacture that time was lost at an increase in cost. The labor problem had not improved since the original construction began, for all civilian employees, mechanics, and farmers were hired by the season since there was no local labor reservoir available.<sup>57</sup>

Elsewhere on the frontier, makeshift materials were pressed into use for almost every type of structure. Field and quarry stone were used wherever possible to insure against decay and consequent expensive repairs to wooden buildings. As previously mentioned, Fort Snelling's impressive appearance came partly from its location on a 300 foot bluff overlooking the Mississippi River, but also from the fact that all buildings and the outside walls were constructed of heavy stone.<sup>58</sup> By comparison Fort Winnebago was a flimsy structure, for whose safety during the Sauk War of the 1830's its inhabitants became alarmed. Mrs. John Kinzie, wife of the Winnebago Indian Agent, records that "Fort Winnebago was not picketed in, there were no defenses to the barracks or officers' quarters, except slight paneled doors and venetian blinds -- nothing that long would resist the blows of clubs or hatchets."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Marryat, A Diary in America, II, 80; see also Boutwell, "Schoolcraft's Exploring Tour of 1832," 139.

<sup>59</sup> Kinzie, Wau-Bun, 474.

Fort Arbuckle, in the Choctaw Nation near the Red River, was built in the spring of 1851. The enlisted men's barracks were constructed of hewn logs for siding. Small bits of wood and clay were used to fill the gaps between the logs. Split logs, commonly called puncheons, were used for flooring. The fireplaces and chimneys also were made of local materials; stone and clay moulded around a wooden framework. Only the roofs required a finished product of some sort, clapboards, which were either cut and finished on the site or shipped up the river from Fort Washita or Fort Jesup, where saw mills were located.<sup>60</sup> Such a situation may have been very common to garrison construction along the Red River, for Lieutenant Colonel Dixon S. Miles was directing new construction at Fort Washita in 1851. Miles reported to departmental headquarters that the only procurable timber along the Red River was cottonwood. All other supplies were shipped very easily to the site by keel boat in the spring when the Red River and smaller streams usually became swollen from incessant rains.<sup>61</sup>

While inspecting a number of Texas posts in 1856, Colonel Joseph K.F. Mansfield recommended that local quarries

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<sup>60</sup>  
Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 81f; and Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 251f.

<sup>61</sup>  
Lieutenant Colonel D.S. Miles to Major F.N. Page, 4 May 1851, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

be used to a greater extent to supply a durable and readily procurable material. At Fort Clark, Mansfield indicated that new officers' quarters and soldiers' barracks could be constructed by civilian work parties and extra-duty men at little or no extra cost to the department.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, at Fort Davis, Mansfield recommended new stone buildings when he saw the decayed condition of the soldiers' and laundresses log huts. Lieutenant Colonel Washington Seawell, who was in command at Fort Davis, suggested to Colonel Mansfield that a new post should be constructed five miles west of the old site. Seawell pointed out that not only would better building materials be available, but also a more adequate water supply and lower land rents could be obtained. Both Seawell and Mansfield agreed that the abundance of field stone in the new area made that material the sine qua non.<sup>63</sup>

The interiors of garrison buildings were usually as rough as the exteriors. Most furniture for offices and quarters was manufactured on the site. Occasionally officers and men would carry their favorite chairs, tables, rugs, pianos, and chests with them whenever they moved as company or regimental units. Single men and officers lived very simply, requiring only the bare essentials of a place to sleep and a table on which to eat or write. Usually bunks

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<sup>62</sup> Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield, Report of Inspection, 1856; 3 June 1856.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 16-20 June 1856.

were constructed in tier fashion for enlisted men's barracks. Mattresses were made from a cotton cloth sack filled with straw or hay. Except for a few nails driven into the walls, where clothes were hung, little else was available for the soldiers' comfort. The essential bits of furniture necessary to equip a bachelor's room were repurchased and resold at every permanent post. Sergeant Percival Lowe estimated that the total value of a lieutenant's furniture did not exceed <sup>64</sup> twenty-five dollars.

Married officers on the other hand, usually traveled with their families and consequently furnished their quarters more elaborately and more luxuriously. The role of women at frontier posts is discussed in more detail in Chapter V, but it is appropriate to state at this point that their presence meant a great deal in the appearance of the niceties of garrison life, not the least of which was interior decoration. Sutlers' inventories indicate rather accurately the tastes of those posts which housed families. Household supplies such as crockery, cooking utensils, kitchen furniture, and curtain and drapery materials seem to indicate the feminine touch, where otherwise tin plates and buffalo skins were used.

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Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 31f; see also, Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 1845-57, passim.



Some wives traveled to the frontier, usually as brides, with every conceivable household possession including mahogany bed room suites, pianos, rugs, sofas, and pictures. Mrs. John Kinzie accompanied her husband, the Indian Agent to the Winnebago, to Fort Winnebago in the early 1830's. The lady had all her furniture and valuables transported from upstate New York by boat over the Great Lakes, by keel boat from Green Bay down the Fox River to the portage, and carted from the river to the fort. Because of the difficulties in passing around rapids and waterfalls, a number of pieces were damaged, but her pride and joy, the piano, reached its wilderness home in safety. The latter item became an object of curiosity and envy for hundreds of miles around. One other piano came into the same general area in 1833, that which belonged to Mrs. Randolph B. Marcy, whose husband was stationed at Fort Howard near Green Bay.<sup>65</sup>

Frontier military posts, then, accomplished the major purpose of housing garrisons which patrolled the western fringe of civilization. Most were primitive shelters, yet all were almost self-sufficient communities. Few were really citadels, yet each stood as a symbol of protection and national authority.

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Kinzie, Wau-Bun, 105f; see also W. Eugene Hollon, Beyond the Cross Timbers (Norman, 1955), 15; 55.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE POST GARDEN

Shortly before Christmas Day, 1849, Percival Lowe and other dragoon recruits arrived at Fort Leavenworth, having marched overland from Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. Food and shelter were comforting, but not entirely satisfying, for when Lowe and his comrades entered the mess hall on Christmas day they found slices of bread and pork on the table and a big kettle of coffee, "each man passed his tin cup which was filled. All of us stood and received our rations, fell back as soon as supplied, and ate our supper - not half as much nutriment as we needed."<sup>1</sup> By June the rations appeared to have improved somewhat. Lowe wrote that after an hour of mounted drill before breakfast he and his fellow recruits sat down "to eat the slice of bread and boiled pork, pepper, vinegar, and coffee. Boiled beef and soup -- bean or rice -- for dinner."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Lowe seems to have accurately described the basic elements of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 21f.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 38.

average army ration of pork, beans, bread, coffee, and one or two condiments.

It was the function and responsibility of the Commissary General of Subsistence to arrange for the basic food supplies for each military post in the United States during the period 1830-60. However, on account of transportation problems and various regional conditions, the actual procurement of supplies became a decentralized or local matter. Advertisements for bids on large quantities of staple items appeared in local and regional papers, on which basis the Commissary General's Department selected contractors for army posts. While the main criterion was economy, the lowest bidder did not always receive the contract. Past performance; local reputation; financial stability, which at times necessitated posting a cash bond; and the ability to deliver within a prescribed time limit were also well established qualifications which army contractors were required to meet.

In September, 1845 the business firm of Robert and John Peebles of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania received a contract to supply Fort Snelling with pork at \$8.25 a barrel, flour \$4.60 a barrel, dried beans \$1.50 a bushel, soap \$0.06 a pound, candles \$0.13 a pound, salt \$0.70 a bushel, and vinegar \$0.18 a gallon. Two years later, Mr. A. S. Bender of

<sup>3</sup>  
Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 152f.

<sup>4</sup>  
Copies of contracts by Messrs. Robert and John Peebles, September, 1845, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

Galena, Illinois contracted to furnish Fort Snelling with similar items at the same or slightly lower units costs. Bender was probably able to deliver the goods at the lower prices because of the relatively easy route of transportation by river from Galena to Fort Snelling. The Pebbles firm, on the other hand, had been able to offer similarly prices because, in addition to the Fort Snelling contract, it supplied large quantities of the same basic items to Forts Crawford, Atkinson, and Leavenworth.<sup>5</sup>

While bulk items of pork, beans, coffee, salt, and flour were hauled to most posts from some relatively large city or town, fresh meat was obtained by various means in the immediate vicinity of the posts. Where game was abundant and civilian contractors absent, military hunting parties usually procured enough fresh meat for garrison's need, through a combined process of business and sport. Sergeant Percival Lowe recalled that his dragoon troops at Fort Leavenworth in the 1850's was supplied with plenty of "fresh beef" because the post meat contractor killed buffalo instead of cattle. No doubt the winking at contract specifications caused some jolity among Lowe's comrades, but they had fresh meat at almost every meal.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Copy of contract with A.S. Bender, 10 January 1847, Ibid.; R. and J. Pebbles contract, September, 1845, Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 39.

Some posts maintained their own cattle herds for breeding and butchering. It was much easier and safer to store beef on the hoof than to butcher large quantities for subsequent use. In the summer of 1837, Major Clifton Wharton instructed the post butcher at Fort Gibson to refrain from slaughtering beeves earlier than twenty-four hours before use so that the meat would not spoil before cooking.<sup>7</sup>

A large herd of beef cattle was maintained at Fort Towson during 1838. By September, Captain Charles O. Collins was able to report to Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Vose that 24,617 pounds of beef on the hoof would be available for the garrison's use during the following year.<sup>8</sup> While stationed at a number of posts in New Mexico after the Mexican War, Sergeant James Bennett spent a major portion of his time as a roaming G.I. cowboy rounding up stray government cattle, or traveling around the countryside from ranch to rancy buying as many head as possible for the winter months.<sup>9</sup> In Chapter VI the method of supplying table game for daily mess requirements is discussed in more detail. It need be said

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<sup>7</sup> Major C. Wharton to Colonel R. Jones, 7 July 1837, Adjutant General's Office, Letters Received.

<sup>8</sup> Captain C.O. Collins to Colonel J. Vose, 18 September 1838, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>9</sup> Brooks and Reeve, (eds.), Forts and Forays, 47; see also Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 128f.

here only that it was a common method by which the daily issued rations were supplemented and made more interesting with fresh meat and, occasionally, fish.

Until 1832, a daily whiskey or grog ration was included in the soldiers' mess. After 1832, extra coffee and sugar rations were substituted for the whiskey. During the 1840's molasses was added to the basic army ration, both as a condiment and as an anti-scorbutic for the winter months when fresh garden produce was not available. Bacon, as a substitute for salt pork, also made its appearance during the 1840's, and by 1860, it was as common a government ration as pork itself. During the late 1850's, dried fruits, tea, hams, rice, and hard bread were commonly included in the general rations purchased in bulk by the Commissary Department.<sup>10</sup>

The post bake house was a prevalent feature at most western military establishments. The building itself was either included in the original building program or added soon afterward. Bread was impossible to obtain in great enough quantities in the immediate vicinity of most western posts. Moreover, bread or even hard tack was a difficult item to transport to isolated garrisons without spoilage, and most editions of the General Regulations included the

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<sup>10</sup>

Day Book, Fort Kearny, Nebraska Territory, 7 July 1858, typed MS. in the Nebraska State Historical Society Library.

obvious official suggestion that each garrison should supply  
 its own needs whenever possible.<sup>11</sup>

The operation of the post bakery came under the jurisdiction of the post council of administration, which hired a baker, provided for construction of ovens and a suitable building, and purchased the necessary ingredients and supplies. The primary ingredient, flour, was purchased either from the post or departmental commissary department or from some outside source; otherwise no flour was issued to the troops as a part of the basic ration. The finished product was usually disposed of in three categories. One portion was sent to the soldiers' mess as a part of the daily ration. Another portion, the consistency of which was like hard tack, was set aside and designated for troops detailed to road building, patrol, or some other activity which would take them away from the post. The remainder was sold to married officers and soldiers for family use, to civilian employees, and to local Indians. The price of bread varied according to production costs, but usually sold for six to eight cents a loaf. In fact, there were two prices, one for military personnel and associates and another for outsiders.<sup>12</sup>

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War Department, General Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1841 (Washington, 1841), 30.

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Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, 1840-48, 11 November 1841, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West. See also War Department, General Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1857 (New York, 1857)

Ordinary monthly expenses for operating the post bakery amounted to four dollars for labor, two dollars for potatoes, hops, and salt, a dollar for wood, twenty-five cents for a broom, and a dollar for miscellaneous supplies, including sieves, dippers, pails, candles, and oven repairs. Thus at the average post, which garrisoned 150 to 200 officers and men, an expenditure of seven to eight dollars a month would operate the bakery.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, income from bread sales frequently amounted to more than twice the amount expended. For example, the operation of the post bakery at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota cost the post council about thirty-five dollars for the months of January, February and March, 1854. Bread sales for the corresponding months amounted to \$112.12, at a time when the average price for bread was eight cents a loaf.<sup>14</sup> The bakery at Fort Mackinac, Michigan was operated for about seven dollars a month between 1846 and 1849, and, during the same period, the average monthly bread sales amounted to twelve dollars.<sup>15</sup>

Occasionally, commercial motives would be allowed to predominate in the operation of the bakery. When the

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<sup>13</sup>

Ibid., 31 December 1845 to 31 December 1846.

<sup>14</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Randall, 2 March 1854; 1 September 1854, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>15</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, 1840-48, Ibid., passim.



post council met at Fort Towson in October, 1838, it decided that the superintendent of the bakery should be allowed to sell flour as well as bread to the officers and men for their own use. The council set the price of such flour at six dollars a barrel. In the course of normal routine, the report was presented to the post commander, Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Vose, for his approval. Vose, a hard-headed Yankee, objected strenuously to the sale of flour at that price. He pointed out that nine dollars a barrel would be a fair price inasmuch as local prices began at twelve dollars a barrel and that it was predicted that the local price would rise as high as twenty dollars a barrel during the following year on account of a grain shortage. Vose felt that reducing the price of flour would be injurious to the state of the post fund, with which bakery expenses were paid. The council, however, upheld its view on the ground that flour could be purchased through the Commissary Department at Cincinnati for six dollars a barrel.

As early as 1818 supplementary elements had been added to the staple issued rations of salt pork, dried beans, coffee, for gardening became one of the duties and pursuits at frontier posts. The practice came about quite naturally as a part of the frontier experience, which a number of

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Resolutions of the Post Council of Administration, Fort Towson, 27 October 1838, and endorsement by Lieutenant Colonel J.H. Vose, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

recruits and officers had doubtless experienced as civilians. But to a greater degree, the matter of economizing on commissary purchasing was a stronger force in developing the gardening program. The War Department constantly searched for ways and means of paring military appropriations in keeping with the established policy of maintaining a small standing army with a militia reserve. Consequently, vegetable gardens were cultivated at all major and many minor military establishments, inasmuch as the maintenance of health also required it. In such a way the government could dispense with the expense of contracting for perishable goods and of transporting them into the wilderness. The War Department went a step further, however, by requiring officers and men to bear the expense of seed, equipment, and time.<sup>17</sup>

One of the first important adjuncts to the building program at Fort Snelling in 1820 was the establishment of extensive gardens. Building construction may have lagged, but the gardening project was an immense success. The War Department sent Henry Schoolcraft to inspect mineral and timber resources in the vicinity of Fort Snelling in 1820, after which he commented enthusiastically:

Since their arrival, the garrison have cleared and put under cultivation about ninety acres of the choicest bottom and prairie lands, which is chiefly

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<sup>17</sup>Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 121f.

planted with Indian corn and potatoes; besides a large hospital garden, a regimental and several company gardens supply vegetables in great abundance for all the men. Here we were first presented with green corn, pease, beans, cucumbers, beets, radishes, lettuce, etc.... We found the wheat entirely ripe, and the melons nearly so. These are the best commentaries that can be offered upon the soil and climate.<sup>18</sup>

During subsequent years, more acreage was put under cultivation in keeping with a War Department directive to enlarge the scope of agricultural activities to include grain cultivation for men and animals. For example, at Fort Atkinson (Iowa), the post corn crop for 1821 amounted to 26,400 bushels, which was grown with like quantities of hay and garden produce. Garden space, varying from five to fourteen acres, was allotted to each company for kitchen gardens, while extensive farming was carried out on a 500 acre tract near the military reservation. Extra funds were earned by the commanding officer and the post sutler, who, in partnership, contracted for army supplies on their own farm. At the same time officers were given supervisory activities over cultivation and livestock, while the enlisted men were detailed to gardening chores, sometimes in preference to military duties.

The experience of the late 1820's proved to be discouraging. Floods, blights, insects or blackbirds leveled

<sup>18</sup>

Schoolcraft, Narrative Journal of Travels, 193f.

<sup>19</sup>

Wesley, "Life at a Frontier Post," 205.

many fields before harvest time. Moreover, it was observed that equipment sometimes was difficult to procure and expensive to maintain over a period of years. So complicated was the procedure of requisitioning staple items and other supplies that it was necessary for the commanding officer to be able to predict the needs of his troops on the basis of the great unknowns in the respective farming operations. One attempt at milling flour from the wheat cultivated on a military farm was carried out at Fort Snelling under the direction of Colonel Josiah Snelling in 1823. Mill stones and other equipment were hauled by river craft from St. Louis by the Quartermaster Department, for which \$288.33 was deducted from the ration allocation for that post. It was hoped that over a period of years the savings accrued from manufacturing the flour needs of the garrison would pay for the cost of the construction of the mill. Unfortunately, the experiment was too short lived to fulfill the hope.

Crop failures and poor quality wheat, even at Fort Snelling, brought a halt to milling operations during the 1820's at most posts. By 1830 other evidence became apparent to raise doubt as to the usefulness and effectiveness

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Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 124.

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George D. Rogers, "History of Flour Manufacture in Minnesota," Collections of the State Historical Society of Minnesota, X (1905), 37.

of the military farm program. Many officers felt that the advantages of a self-sufficient garrison economy would not and could not compensate for poorly trained recruits and ineffective military operations. Recruits, who had enlisted under the impression that they would be "soldiering" most of their days, became disillusioned with their daily tasks of hog care, weeding, carpentry, or well digging.<sup>22</sup>

Colonel Willoughby Morgan, commander at Fort Crawford in 1830, indicated his disenchantment concerning the gardening program to General Henry Atkinson: "I have been informed that Captain Gale is raising corn at Fort Snelling, with which he proposes to supply the Qr. Masters' Department -- You and myself have had some experience in the attempt to unite the farmer and the soldier, and I have some reason to believe that you are satisfied (as I am) that it is not practicable. I should therefore be pleased if Captain Gale were instructed that he will not hereafter be required to raise corn; especially as it will require a considerable portion of his command to defend his fields against the blackbirds -- and no small expense for ammunition."<sup>23</sup>

In April, 1833 the Adjutant General's Office formally brought an end to extensive farming operations through a

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Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 125.

23

Colonel W. Morgan to General H. Atkinson, 21 August 1830, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

series of circulars which at the same time made allowances for the continuation of kitchen gardens. In July, 1833 Lieutenant Colonel Enos Cutler was informed that it was the intention of the War Department to remove the hardships of general cultivation and at the same time leave "the cultivation of mere gardens at the several military posts for the use of all the officers and men...."<sup>24</sup> Apparently the official edicts were both strict and ambiguous, which caused many commanding officers to question the methods by which garden produce, forage, and beef might be obtained without neglecting military duties. In August, 1833 General Henry Atkinson, commanding the Department of the West, was asked by Captain William H. Wickliffe to render an opinion concerning hiring civilian contractors to supply the gardening needs of troops at Fort Leavenworth:

I would respectfully call your attention to the subject of contractors who are from the nature of the contract, compelled to reside at or near posts...last year the contractor for supplying this post with fresh beef was permitted to reside in the vicinity of the post and to cultivate as much land as he wished.... The present contractor is a Mr. Bowles who wishes to bring his family...and to be allowed to cultivate corn etc. for the supply of the post. The recent orders have been so strict respecting the cultivation of land at the frontier posts that I should respectfully request to know of you whether Mr. Bowles should be permitted to cultivate or not.

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24

Adjutant General's Office to Lieutenant Colonel E. Cutler, 17 July 1833, Ibid.

General Atkinson indicated that in the light of previous experiences it was proper to contract for such supplies as long as discipline was maintained and no illicit trade was conducted between military and civilian personnel. On this basis Bowles was given the job of supplying corn.<sup>25</sup>

Between 1833 and 1851 gardening activities were almost always confined to the care and maintenance of company and regimental gardens. Colonel George Croghan, during his tour of inspection of Forts Mackinac, Howard, Crawford, Armstrong, and Leavenworth in 1834, observed that messing arrangements were unusually good because of the abundant production of vegetables from the post gardens. At Fort Howard, Croghan thought General Brooke's personal garden was the best in the area. However, he noted that, although the produce from company gardens was essential, the arrangements for their cultivation were not in keeping with established military policies. Colonel Croghan looked forward to a War Department order which would prevent commanding officers from constantly detailing the same group of soldiers to gardening chores, while at the same time their respective military functions were being neglected. As a solution, Croghan proposed that "every work be performed by regular detail and for the common good, and it will very soon be

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Captain W. N. Wickliffe to General H. Atkinson, 29 August 1833, and endorsement, Ibid.

made to appear that the soldiers' fatigue service will be lessened by one half at least."<sup>26</sup>

During the following year Fort Howard was visited by George Featherstonhaugh, a British traveler, who formed a different, though somewhat roseate, view of the gardening program conducted by General George M. Brooke. Observing the extent of cultivation and the excellence and variety of vegetables, Featherstonhaugh raved, "Everything I saw at the Fort convinced me that General Brooke was exceedingly attentive to the welfare of those under his command. Having a passion for horticulture, he had laid out extensive gardens, and turning his men into gardeners when they were not on duty, had not only taught them a valuable art, but had enabled them to provide amply for their own subsistence."<sup>27</sup>

Regardless of the extent of gardening activities, success nevertheless depended upon soil and climatic conditions. In 1838, Captain Eustace Trenor, stationed at Fort Gibson, reported that although the water pump was working, his post gardens had failed because the late July rains were hardly sufficient to overcome the previous months' daily and

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<sup>26</sup>

Inspector Generals Reports, 1830-36, and 1842, "Report on Fort Howard," 2 August 1834, 57-60 (old pagination), Inspector General's Office.

<sup>27</sup>

Featherstonhaugh, A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Sotar, I, 153f.



incessant temperatures of ninety-six to one hundred and five  
degrees.<sup>28</sup> Gardening activities at Fort Gibson continued,

however, for in 1846 Captain Charles O. Collins petitioned the post council of administration to approve a plan of providing funds for garden seeds and acreage for the benefit and health of civilian employees. The council acquiesced and thereafter set aside for civilian employee's gardens a sum equal to the amount allowed for each company garden.<sup>29</sup>

The records of subsequent meetings of the Fort Gibson post council indicate that extensive farming operations appeared to be reviving. During the meeting of February 1, 1849, the council appropriated twenty-five dollars for garden fence rails, seven dollars and fifty cents for a new plough, and, during March and April meetings, fourteen dollars for thirty-eight new hoes for cultivation work.<sup>30</sup> Five years later,

Surgeon Burton Randall complained to the post adjutant that his hospital fences were in such a state of disrepair that the regiment's hogs were ravaging a considerable portion of the garden area. An immediate order was issued for the

<sup>28</sup>

Captain E. Trenor to Lieutenant Colonel R.B. Major, 2 August 1838, Fort Gibson Register of Letters Sent, 1838, Records of Army Commands.

<sup>29</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 1845-57, 2 January 1846, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>30</sup>

Ibid., 1 February 1849, 31 March 1849, and 1 April 1849.

company carpenter to make repairs to prevent further damage  
<sup>31</sup>  
 to the surgeon's crops.

At other posts, councils of administration gave frequent attention to ordering garden seeds and equipment early every spring. The council at Fort Mackinac met in April, 1842, to pay bills totaling twenty-five dollars for seeds from Detroit and from the local American Fur Company store, and for a freight bill for seed potatoes. Similar amounts were voted upon and passed each succeeding year for the benefit of the entire command.

<sup>32</sup> Government supplies of garden seeds came about indirectly. In April, 1847 Colonel George Gibson, Commissary General of Subsistence, ordered his St. Louis assistant, Major Richard B. Lee to supply "mounted volunteers on route to New Mexico with such quantities and kinds of garden seeds which can be properly used at posts to be occupied by them."<sup>33</sup>

In the meantime, before Major Lee was able to put the plan into effect, Surgeon Samuel G.I. DeCamp at Santa Fe reported that inasmuch as the vegetable diet was almost unknown in Santa Fe, Missouri, volunteer troops would probably suffer from scurvy, unless some

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<sup>31</sup>  
 Surgeon B. Randall to Lieutenant J. H. Forney,  
 12 August 1854, Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>  
 Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac,  
 30 April 1842 et passim, Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>  
 Colonel G. Gibson to Major R.B. Lee, 5 April 1847,  
 Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

form of anti-scorbutic were supplied. He further suggested that when regular troops were sent to the Southwest abundant supplies of garden seeds be sent with them. In most areas, De Camp observed, the soil and climatic conditions were suitable for most types of garden cultivation.<sup>34</sup>

Similar extensive farming operations were proposed for Fort Kearny at Grand Island on the Oregon Trail. Lieutenant D.P. Woodbury suggested to Colonel Joseph Totten, Chief of Engineers, that the military reservation on Grand Island be limited to ten square miles and the rest of the land on the island be opened to everyone. Woodbury hoped that through such a plan "land would be occupied by the squatter, the pioneer, and the hard working farmer," whose presence and diligence would tend to make food and forage prices lower than if the land were leased to non-competitive army contractors. Woodbury observed that the plan would benefit not only military personnel, but also pioneers and travelers who might stop at or near the post.<sup>35</sup> Some attempts were made at Fort Laramie during the summer of 1850 to develop a self-sufficient agricultural economy. The program was moderately successful, for quantities of corn, potatoes, and other garden vegetables were harvested periodic-

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<sup>34</sup>  
Surgeon S.G.I. De Camp to General T. Lawson, 14 August 1847, Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>  
Lieutenant D. P. Woodbury to Colonel J. Totten, 1 August 1849, typed MS. in Nebraska State Historical Society Library.

ally during the summer.<sup>36</sup>

In successive years when drouth conditions developed, modern methods of irrigation farming were introduced at Fort Laramie by Mexicans and Southwestern Indians who had migrated to the North. Eventually, when extensive farming was resumed, such artificial methods became very common.<sup>37</sup> In fact, the former methods of extensive farming appear to have been resumed at Fort Leavenworth, also on the Oregon Trail. Colonel Samuel Cooper, Assistant Adjutant General, inspected the post in November, 1850 and reported that "during the past year farming has been carried on at this post to a considerable extent in the cultivation of nearly 1400 acres, the crops raised consisting of corn, oats, and hay...."<sup>38</sup>

With the extension of the military frontier hundreds of miles beyond the forward edge of civilization, thoughts of self-sufficiency for western military posts were reconsidered. Local contractors for agricultural products were not found in great numbers near new forts after the Mexican War, so that prices were monopolistic without much competition. Transporting supplies into the interior, moreover,

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<sup>36</sup> Hafen and Young, Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 168.

<sup>37</sup> Charles G. Coutant, History of Wyoming (Laramie, 1899), I, 327f.

<sup>38</sup> Colonel S. Cooper, Report of Inspection, 15-18 November 1850, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

had reached an impasse. Navigation on the few rivers which penetrated the Great Plains was almost negligible. The method of letting contracts for hauling military supplies to such firms as Majors, Russell, and Waddell, commercial pioneers in western freighting, had proven very expensive and time consuming, as well as rather uncertain during the Mexican War years. Few improvements were made to military or civilian wagon trains during the 1850's, and it was not until after the Civil War that the western posts were benefited by railroads.<sup>39</sup>

In January, 1851 the War Department issued a series of circulars and general orders, which had the general effect of resurrecting the extensive farm-culture system of the early 1820's. The new system, however, was much more elaborate than the earlier program in that a detailed set of annual reports and balance sheets were required from every military post which participated in the program. All crops, vegetables or grains, and livestock raised on military farms were to be sold to post or regimental commissary departments at current local market prices. The net proceeds were to be divided<sup>40</sup> among the troops on an extra salary basis for farm work. During the previous decade, troops had been paid from the post fund for extra duty assignments such as gardening,

<sup>39</sup>  
Raymond W. and Mary L. Settle, Empire on Wheels  
(Stanford, 1949), 22f.

<sup>40</sup>

Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 126.

haying, or cattle tending. The rates during the 1840's were fifty cents a day for an eight hour work day during the winter months and seventy-five cents a day for a ten hour work day during the summer months.<sup>41</sup>

Before the new system was put into effect, evidence of misgivings came pouring into headquarters of the Department of the West, which had immediate control over much of the western agricultural region. Captain Isaac Lynde, a company commander at Fort Towson, indicated that although sufficient land was available, farm cultivation seemed impractical "because men cannot be spared for such duty and because Indians are not willing to work."<sup>42</sup> From Fort Washita, Lieutenant Colonel Dixon S. Miles reported that land for cultivation was available on the military reservation, but that there would not be enough time to prepare the ground for those crops which could be grown in the region that year. Miles, like Lynde, indicated that Indian participation was not feasible. "The Chickasaws, mostly wealthy owners of Negroes, receive large annuities annually and refrain from all labor -- possibly they might hire their Negroes." Apart from the labor problem, Miles expressed serious doubts whether the entire project would be economical

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War Department, General Regulations...1841, 43f.

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Captain I. Lynde to Major F.N. Page, 24 February 1861, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

in the final analysis. He pointed out that if commodities were purchased by his commissary department at rates then current in New Orleans, which were usually fifty per cent higher than local prices, the government would lose over \$9,000 a year at Fort Washita alone.<sup>43</sup>

Despite an early note of skepticism, Lieutenant Colonel Miles proceeded to organize the men and materials in his command in keeping with the spirit and the letter of the government farm program. He divided a twenty acre arable strip into two eight-acre plots, one for each company at the post, and the remaining four acres he set aside for the use of the staff officers and the post hospital. The commanding officer of each company was given the responsibility of superintending his company's garden area, while Miles himself undertook the direction of the staff's acreage. Enthusiasm and esprit de corps were promoted through intense competition among the participants as to which units could grow the best produce, which could grow the greatest variety, and which could grow the greatest amount.<sup>44</sup>

At nearby Fort Arbuckle, Surgeon Rodney Glisan inherited the duties of superintending the gardens of the commanding officer as well as those of the hospital. He found

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Lieutenant Colonel D.S. Miles to Major F.N. Page, 2 March 1851, Ibid.

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Lieutenant Colonel D.S. Miles to Major F. N. Page, 4 March 1851, Ibid.

the duties agreeable enough, but questioned the extensive nature of the plan which he described as "a product of the last periodical, economical fit of the Government for re-trenchment."<sup>45</sup> From Texas came the reports of Colonel William S. Harney, who indicated that all posts in the cordon on the Texas frontier, except those on the Rio Grande River, were capable of maintaining kitchen gardens that year. Inasmuch as the government circular was received too late in the season, Harney advised the Adjutant General's Office that surplus crops and forage could not be planted in time for extensive farming operations that year. Plans for the following year, Colonel Harney indicated, would be based on the assumption that only three of the thirteen posts in his command would be permanent and therefore plans for the others would not need consideration.

Meanwhile at Fort Leavenworth, Colonel Edwin V. Sumner, the commanding officer, anticipated the possibility of maintaining the post's 1,400 acre farm on which to grow the food and forage requirements of the garrison. Local food and forage prices in 1851 were exorbitant according to Sumner's calculations. To the War Department's queries concerning the use of Indian labor, Sumner replied that it

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<sup>45</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 111f.

<sup>46</sup>

Colonel W.S. Harney to Colonel R. Jones, 1 April 1851, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.



would be less expensive to hire white help rather than rely on Indian workers, who would receive better training in agricultural pursuits at local schools or mission stations.<sup>47</sup>

At the end of the first year, reports from most military stations indicated that for one reason or another the extensive farming venture had not lived up to expectations. The initial cost for seeds and equipment, as well as for purchasing supplementary food and forage until harvest time, had offset any savings which might have accrued through self-sufficiency by the end of the year. Congress was called upon to make up the difference with a special appropriation.<sup>48</sup> Captain Henry W. Wharton, commanding officer at Fort Kearny, was among the small group of fortunate military farmers whose crops neither dried up nor washed away. In January, 1852, when the agricultural accounts were settled for the previous year, Colonel Roger Jones, the Adjutant General, wrote Captain Wharton a special letter of commendation. Wharton, it appears magically had been able to comply with the general orders of 1851 and had produced 750 bushels of oats and 200 bushels of potatoes, despite poor weather conditions in his area.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Louis Pelzer, Marches of the Dragoons in the Mississippi Valley (Iowa City, 1917), 171.

<sup>48</sup> Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 127f.

<sup>49</sup> Colonel R. Jones to Captain W.H. Wharton, 7 January 1852, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

In February, 1852, a board of company officers convened at Fort Gibson for the purpose of selecting garden sites and estimating seed requirements for the following year. It was decided that the area formerly used for kitchen gardens would be redistributed into an equal number of lots; one for each company, and one each for the hospital and staff officers. Plans were made for repairing the fences and for a supply of manure with which to prepare the ground before planting time. Finally, it was agreed that about twenty-eight dollars would pay for the following variety of seeds: potatoes, cabbage, turnip, tomato, okra, beets, onion, parsnip, lettuce, watermelon, cantaloupe, radish, cucumber, peas, parsley, celery, oyster plant, egg plant, snap and lima beans, rhubarb, and asparagus.

During the summer and autumn of 1853, Lieutenant Colonel W. G. Freeman inspected the Eighth Military District, which included all posts within Texas. At Ringgold Barracks, Freeman observed that scurvy had disappeared inasmuch as potatoes and other fresh vegetables had been purchased with company funds to supplement the staple diet. The weather conditions at Ringgold Barracks were ordinarily severe in winter and summer. On July 14, 1853, Freeman reported that

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Report of a Board of Survey, Fort Gibson, Captain H. Little, President; approved by Major G. Andrews, 9 February 1852, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

"the mean maximum was 102° F. at three in the afternoon... although...the thermometer often falls during the autumn and winter months from 75° or 80° to below the freezing point in the same day and sometimes in a few hours. During the hot months it often indicates 106° or 108° in the shade." The lack of adequate rainfall and the intense heat made it impossible to cultivate gardens. Moving to Fort McIntosh on July 22, Freeman recorded that "the provisions of the men were wholesome and well cooked, and the messing arrangements generally excellent. There is a fine garden which contributes to the comfort of the command." During the remainder of his trip, Freeman contrasted the fruits and failures of other posts. The best and largest gardens were at Fort McKavett, where irrigation was practiced, while at Fort Belknap initial expenses were barely met.

During the same period, Colonel Joseph K.F. Mansfield was inspecting the Ninth Military District of New Mexico. While at Fort Union, he reported:

The troops cultivate a garden which is irrigated by raising water by mule and hand power, and thus they are supplied with vegetables in part. A farm is also cultivated under the regulations established by the Hon. Sec'y of War Conrad. This farm...is 25 miles distant. About 50 acres of corn was planted which look well and about 75 tons of hay was cut off the natural meadow. A citizen is employed to take charge of this farm at

51

Lieutenant Colonel W. G. Freeman, Report of the Eighth Military District, 1853, 14 July 1853; 22 July 1853; 27 July - 6 August 1853, A.G.O.

the rate of 65 dollars a month and one ration and a detachment of troops are kept at it to cultivate it. Although the farming interest in New Mexico is about 14,000 dollars in debt, I would recommend the keeping up of this farm as it is well irrigated, but without the citizen employed in superintending it, more as a convenient locality to recruit horses, and fat cattle for beef and gather hay, than profit to be divided among the soldiers.<sup>52</sup>

At Cantonment Burgwin, near Raos, New Mexico, Colonel Mansfield found tillable land in a well irrigated valley which was fed by four small mountain streams. He estimated that tracts averaging eight miles in width and fifteen miles in length would be more than sufficient for supplying the needs of the garrison and the local population of Indians which amounted to about 7,000 persons.<sup>53</sup> Stopping at Fort Defiance in mid-September, Colonel Mansfield reported that "the warm season here is long enough to bring all vegetables to maturity, and there is an excellent garden attached to this post irrigated by a spring that exists in the Canon.... There are no other facilities for farming here, but notwithstanding, it has been tried and proved a failure."<sup>54</sup> On his return trip to Washington, D.C., Mansfield stopped at Las Lunas where a temporary camp had been established. As at

<sup>52</sup> Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield, Inspection Report of the Ninth Military District, 1853, 1-6 August 1853, A.G.O.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 20-23 August 1853.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 15-20 September 1853.

other posts a garden was cultivated to supply the garrison with fresh vegetables. At the same time, Captain Richard S. Ewell was operating a farm with some success. Mansfield reported that a garden and farm property as well as irrigation facilities had been given to the command by local civilians in appreciation of the protection the garrison was giving them.<sup>55</sup>

After the tabulation of the 1853 season of gardening failures, the Adjutant General's Office canceled the extensive farming program in February, 1854. Thereafter, gardening ventures were purely voluntary and were supported by post or regimental funds. Apparently intense interest had been generated during the seasons of the compulsory farm program at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, for after its demise, officers and soldiers engaged in a voluntary farm project. In April, 1854, the post council of administration appropriated an additional \$15 from the post fund to pay for freight charges on the new plough and to buy some locust seeds. At three successive meetings, thereafter, more than \$140 was appropriated for garden seeds and equipment for the following year. During the April meeting an additional five dollars was earmarked for a subscription to The Horticulturist. In February, 1856, only five dollars was allocated for garden seeds, but at the next meeting, the council voted for library

<sup>55</sup>

Ibid., 25-27 September 1853.

funds to purchase "Land Draining," "Youalt on Hog," "Youalt on Sheep," "American Poultry Yard," "Fruit and Flowers," and "Pandee on Strawberries." Finally, during the November and December meetings for 1856, over \$175 was appropriated for garden seeds for the following season.<sup>56</sup>

During the spring and summer of 1856, Colonel Joseph K.F. Mansfield returned to the Southwest to inspect the posts of the Department of Texas. Random selections from his report indicate that weather and soil conditions conspired to prevent growth in one location, but varied enough elsewhere to provide successful gardening results. Mansfield visited Ringgold Barracks in May where he reported, "Companies E, K, and G have gardens that are promising for this locality; and no doubt will give some return for the labour bestowed upon them." Later in May, he stopped at Fort McIntosh, "There are very few vegetables to be had in this vicinity -- onions are brought from Mexico. Such is the want of seasonable rains here that gardens appear out of the question and men suffer much from scurvy." In June, Colonel Mansfield traveled to Camp Lancaster, where, as at Fort McIntosh, he found that "two small gardens attempted by the companies, but the season here is so dry that it will be difficult to

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Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, 1854-57; 29 April 1854; July, 1854; April, 1855; February, 1856; et passim, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

raise vegetables." Later in June, he stopped at Fort Davis, where he happily reported that, "The success attending a garden here thus far, with abundant water from the springs to be used in the dry season, is cheering to the command beyond the reach of a market and it can rely on early vegetables in abundance with reasonable attendance. In April, May, and June, 1855, it rained 20 times and 5.17 inches fell; but in the same months this year to date it rained but 9 times and 3.26 inches fell, which is probably the cause of the present bad prospects for vegetables to date."<sup>57</sup>

Delicacies were not unknown items at frontier posts. The post sutler usually carried packaged and tinned food-stuffs some of which were imported or were procured from large eastern grocery concerns. The extra niceties for the table, however, were usually too expensive for enlisted personnel, hence were stocked by the sutler primarily for the officers and wealthier civilian neighbors. John Kennerly, sutler at Fort Atkinson (Iowa) carried sausage, cheese, dried fruits, tea, coffee, spices, eggs, preserves of various types, and an assortment of dried and fresh meats.<sup>58</sup> From Fort Leavenworth in 1834, Major Bennett Riley wrote to General Henry Atkinson that Turkey and venison hams were available

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<sup>57</sup> Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield, Inspection Report of the Department of Texas, 1856; 37-88, (old pagination), A.G.O.

<sup>58</sup> Wesley, "Life at a Frontier Post," 206.

near the post at the reasonable rates of twelve and a half cents per pound.<sup>59</sup> At Forts Arbuckle and Washita, near the Red River, Dr. Rodney Glisan enjoyed two particularly sumptuous Christmas dinners in 1850 and 1852. In addition to an assortment of meats that included ham, venison, turkey, fowl, and buffalo, fresh vegetables and an array of table wines<sup>60</sup> were available to make the occasions more enjoyable.

A survey of the post council records of Fort Mackinac, Michigan indicates the wide variety of food items that the sutlers carried in their stores. Among the dry goods and sundries were tea, raisins, lump and loaf sugar, ground and whole spices, citron, vermicelli, macaroni, buckwheat flour, catsup, tinned herring, smoked hams, apples, sardines, pickles, candies, and figs.<sup>61</sup> In 1854 the post council of administration at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota prepared to dig in for the winter with a resolution "that the post sutler be directed to keep a good supply of preserved fruits, meats, spices, butter, and lard, such as, by experience, may appear to be the most required at this post in this climate in the winter."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Major B. Riley to General H. Atkinson, 12 January 1834, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>60</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 22; 101.

<sup>61</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, 1842-45, passim, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>62</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, 1 September 1854, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.



In January, 1858, Mr. Henry Clark, sutler at Fort Randall, Nebraska Territory, was advised by the post council that the current costs of butter and eggs were fifty cents a pound and forty cents a dozen and the same items should be sold for seventy cents and sixty cents, respectively.<sup>63</sup>

Dinner wines were quite common at officers' tables, and therefore, despite War Department restrictions, sutlers usually carried a variety of cordials as well as whiskeys, beer, gin, and brandy. Mr. Clark, the sutler at Fort Randall, Nebraska Territory, for example, stocked Blackberry, Raspberry, and Cherry brandies for two dollars a bottle, Claret and Champagne Cider for a dollar-and-a-half, and Port and Sherry for three dollars a bottle.<sup>64</sup> Often some officers drank to excess, and the problem of alcoholism per se is discussed later in Chapter VIII on the health problem in general. However, it was a mark of distinction and hospitality for a host who wished to present the appearance of being a gourmet to serve wine before, during, and after dinner. Indeed, in the mid-nineteenth century wine was a significant part of the leisurely pleasure of dining, whether at Willard's in Washington, D.C. or at the rough oak table at a frontier post. Consequently, the receipt of a bottle

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<sup>63</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Randall, 27 January 1858, Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 20 November 1858.

of wine as a gift called for a gallant and heartfelt reply of thanks, such as General Edmund P. Gaines note to his friend General Henry Atkinson, "I ought sooner to have thanked you for your letter by Captain Rogers with the Champaign, which was drunk by our mutual friends with great cordiality-- not without a kind look in the mind's eye toward you and your beloved Lady and child...."<sup>65</sup>

The matter of furnishing the necessities of life for frontier military garrisons, thus, was a common denominator for every post in every region. The general trend was toward supplementing the basic rations issued, as much as possible and wherever possible, by local purchases, by long-distance shipments, or by local subsistence and extensive farming programs. The soldiers diet was thus varied made more palatable and more nutritious.

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General E. P. Gaines to General H. Atkinson, 28 June 1836, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

## CHAPTER V

### CIVILIAN PERSONNEL AND GARRISON LIFE

The role of the army in shaping the development of the western frontier can be viewed in various lights. In one respect the army frequently spearheaded the march of civilization, in opening and protecting the trail for the farmer and the trader. In a slightly different light, the military community attracted the same farmers and traders into its sphere of economic activity, wherein a program of mutual support and survival developed. In any case, the presence of the military usually had a profound and frequently lasting effect upon the social, economic, and political structures of any region within its scope of operation.<sup>1</sup>

While the members of the frontier garrisons were affecting the lives and fortunes of others in their immediate vicinity, the military themselves were influenced by their civilian neighbors through daily contacts with them. In the light of the basic nineteenth century military policy of

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<sup>1</sup> Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 219f.

maintaining a small standing army and a larger militia reserve, it is not strange to find a large number of civilians taking part in the daily activities of the frontier military post. On the main parade ground or the thoroughfare encircling the post, one might have encountered a roughly clad teamster, a local blacksmith, and a farmer or two discussing business affairs with a neatly dressed Quartermaster officer. Here and there one might see building repairs being made or new construction in progress by civilian carpenters, mechanics, and masons under the direction of military leaders. There, outside the commanding officer's quarters, the sutler and the laundress might be waiting for an interview with the post commander in order to discuss the settlement of debts due from deserted and deceased soldiers.

Probably the most active and influential citizen at the frontier garrison was the sutler. The sutler fulfilled so many functions that it is difficult to summarize his position in a single word. From one point of view he might be classified as a tavern keeper, yet in reality his main occupation was that of operating an early day post exchange. His stock, however, was usually so large and so varied that his establishment took on the general atmosphere of a country store, for the sutler's business contacts extended beyond the confines of the post. Inasmuch as two to six months frequently elapsed between pay days, the sutler became the

major creditor on the post, and allowed most individuals to charge purchases for thirty to sixty days. The sutler could be counted upon for support in a missionary program, although he might sell beer and whiskey at his store. He ordered seeds and garden equipment for the post farmers and, at the same time, stood ready to supplement the harvest table with a rich assortment of delicacies, or to provide tinned and packaged goods whenever drouth or blight killed the crops. He sold dry goods and thread to the post ladies, but generally had on hand a stock of ready-to-wear clothing.

The system of suttling originated shortly after the War of 1812 and was established for two general purposes. First, it provided a program to supply the soldier with such items as were not furnished by the army at prices which the soldier could afford. On the other hand, the system was intended to offer a worthy and remunerative occupation for disbanded army officers who otherwise could not have lived on savings or their meagre, infrequent government pensions. The appointment and control of the sutler came under the jurisdiction of the post council of administration, which was guided in its activities by the General Regulations. Few changes regarding the sutler's situation were made

<sup>2</sup>  
Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, Michigan, 1840-46, 14 September 1840, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>3</sup>  
Inspection Reports, 1830-36, and 1842, 26 August 1836, O.I.G.

between 1830 and 1860, except the major restriction in 1833 of prohibiting the keeping or selling of liquor. Despite this restriction and the possible penalty of losing his contract, the average sutler maintained a small stock of liquors<sup>4</sup> for himself and his friends.

The post or regimental sutler was officially appointed by the Secretary of War for a term of three years upon the recommendation of the post council with the approval of the commanding officer. No tax, except an authorized maximum assessment, could be levied on the sutler. The maximum, which varied between ten and twelve cents per man according to the General Regulations, was rarely applied. Ordinarily, post commanders allowed the sutler to use a vacant government building on the post or extended government services for the sutler to erect his own store and storage facilities on the military reservation. In order to assure fair rates and an even distribution of useful items, the post council was authorized to inspect the sutler's store and to fix maximum unit prices on every item in stock. The final list of unit prices was posted in a conspicuous place within the store in a manner similar to current ceiling price lists. The price list, it should be added, applied to both cash and credit customers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 20.

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War Department, General Regulations, 1857, 28.

In the late 1820's, the post sutler at Fort Atkinson (Iowa), James Kennerly, was a civilian operator, but was given the rank of cadet with no military duties. The fact that his stock was valued at \$20,000 in 1826 might indicate that few retired or disabled army officers could hope to qualify for the sutler's position without a substantial amount of investment capital. The position was nonetheless attractive when one considers the potential profits from a near monopoly enterprise. Kennerly carried on a thriving business, paid only ten cents per man per month to the post fund, and supported a wife, two children, three Negro servants, and his wife's brothers, and a man to tend the billiard room.<sup>6</sup>

At Fort Gibson, Colonel John Nicks, a retired army officer, maintained a sutler's store from 1827 until he died in 1832. He left his widow an estimated estate of \$20,000, in addition to \$10,000 worth of unsold goods at Fort Gibson and at a Fort Smith trading post, where he had formed a partnership with a John Rogers.<sup>7</sup> After Nicks' death, General Mathew Arbuckle appointed his young widow post sutler at Fort Gibson until such time as she was able to dispose of the remaining goods. It was during the autumn of 1832 that

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<sup>6</sup> Wesley, "Life at a Frontier Post," 203f.

<sup>7</sup> Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, 99; 167n.

Washington Irving visited Fort Gibson and observed that the popularity of the newly enriched young lady was amazing. The post's most eligible bachelors, including the commanding officer, were battling for the lady's hand, even to the point of serenading her under the stars.

Lieutenant Arnold Harris joined the Seventh Infantry Regiment at Fort Gibson in July, 1834, directly after graduating from the Military Academy. During his service at Fort Gibson, he became General Arbuckle's aide in 1836, but in 1837 Harris resigned from the army. From 1837 to 1844, Harris prospered as a merchant at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and, at the same time, maintained a sutler's store at Fort Gibson. In 1841 Major Ethan Allen Hitchcock visited Harris and observed that, as sutler and a former army officer, he was social leader of the younger group of officers. Harris and his wife entertained lavishly at the annual fall races, a number of dinners, and card parties at the post. In addition to Harris' store, two other commercial establishments were operated at Fort Gibson. In August, 1839, the Adjutant General's Office granted a three year contract to a Mr. J. B.

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<sup>8</sup>  
McDermott, (ed.), The Western Journals of Washington Irving, 150.

<sup>9</sup>  
George W. Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York (New York, 1868) I, 382; see also Foreman, (ed.), A Traveller in Indian Territory, 32; and Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 66.



Lynde, who was transferring from Fort Wayne, on the Illinois River.<sup>10</sup> Shortly before the confirmation of Lynde's appointment, the Fort Gibson post council of administration hired another man as sutler too, a Mr. Galloway whose stock ranged upwards of \$50,000 worth of goods.<sup>11</sup> The number of sutlers at Fort Gibson was maintained at three during the decade of the forties, especially when more troops were added to General Arbuckle's command during and after the Mexican War.<sup>12</sup>

At other posts, sutlers were appointed for various reasons and from various backgrounds. Captain Robert A. McCabe resigned from the army in 1833, having served his country for twenty-one years, in order to accept a more lucrative position as Indian Agent and Postmaster at Fort Winnebago. In 1836, McCabe moved to Fort Mackinac where he served as post sutler until 1840.<sup>13</sup> Captain John B.S. Todd resigned his commission in August, 1856 and was immediately elected sutler by the Fort Randall, Nebraska, post council of administration. His appointment was confirmed by the

<sup>10</sup> Adjutant General's Office to General M. Arbuckle, 10 November 1840, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>11</sup> Post Council of Administration, Fort Gibson, to Adjutant General's Office, 28 August 1840, Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 1845-57, 1 January 1846-31 December 1848, Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Merrell, "Pioneer Life in Wisconsin," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, VII (1908), 403f.

Secretary of War in October, 1856, from which time Todd began his five years' service at Fort Randall. After the outbreak of the Civil War, Todd moved to Yankton, South Dakota, where he remained as a merchant until his death in 1872.<sup>14</sup> Assistant Surgeon Thomas S. Bryant complained to Colonel Roger Jones, the Adjutant General, that he was not able to support a family on the current salary for assistant surgeons. Bryant proposed that Colonel Jones accept his resignation from the army and, then, consider his application for the post of sutler at Jefferson Barracks.<sup>15</sup> At the same time the Adjutant General received a petition from a Mr. D. D. McNair of St. Louis, Missouri for an appointment as sutler at Jefferson Barracks. McNair's brother had formerly held the post, but had been killed by lightning, leaving a large family, which D. D. McNair was undertaking to support.<sup>16</sup> McNair received the appointment. Because of a shortage of medical personnel, Bryant's resignation was not accepted until December, 1835. Whether because of unemployment or a lack of security as a civilian, Bryant rejoined in June, 1836

<sup>14</sup>  
Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Randall, 13 August 1856; 31 October 1856; see also Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 691f.

<sup>15</sup>  
Assistant Surgeon W. Bryant to Colonel R. Jones, 20 July 1830, Adjutant General's Office, Letters Received.

<sup>16</sup>  
D. D. McNair to Adjutant General's Office, 20 July 1830; and endorsement, Ibid.

as a Lieutenant in the First Dragoon Regiment.<sup>17</sup>

At most posts the sutler had a virtual monopoly on trade with the soldiers within the confines of the military reservation. Occasionally, some competition would develop when a whiskey dealer set up an illegal still or a makeshift saloon just beyond the reach of military authority. On most other items, however, the sutler, with the approval of the post council, could name his own prices. Whenever a new store was established or when the sutler received a new supply of goods, the post council normally met at the sutler's store to examine the quantity and quality of the goods and to establish prices within the reach of the average soldier. At the same time, consideration was given for the sutler to make a reasonable profit on his merchandise. In the fall of 1858, the post council at Platte Bridge, Nebraska reduced the sutler's prices on many items, including wines, canned foods, soap, tobacco, and dairy products. While the latter items were reduced as much as twenty per cent, there was a ten per cent increase on the prices of hats, shirts, and ready-to-wear garments.<sup>18</sup>

In March, 1859 Henry Clark resigned as sutler at Platte Bridge and was replaced by John Richards, on which

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<sup>17</sup> Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary, I, 257.

<sup>18</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Platte Bridge, Nebraska, 20 November 1858, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

occasion a meeting of the post council was called. Following the principles of the previous year, the council reduced prices on perishable items for quick sales, while prices on dry goods and sundries were raised slightly. During the same period, tobacco at most frontier posts sold for seventy-<sup>19</sup> five cents to one dollar a pound according to the grade.

As previously mentioned, the only tax imposed upon the sutler was a monthly assessment, which was more often reckoned by the post council than by the General Regulations. While the maximum tax was usually set at twelve cents per man per month, a sliding scale was established in 1857 so that if the post garrison were greater than one hundred, the maximum assessment would be only eight cents per man per<sup>20</sup> month. During the 1840's, the sutler at Fort Mackinac was usually assessed at the rate of ten cents per month per man, although in December, 1845 the rate for one hundred and<sup>21</sup> eleven officers and men was only one cent each. Elsewhere on the western frontier, whether at Fort Ridgely in the North or at Fort Gibson in the South, the sutler's monthly contribution to the post fund rarely exceeded ten dollars per<sup>22</sup> month.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 5 March 1859.

<sup>20</sup> War Department, General Regulations, 1857, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Post Council of Administration Books, Fort Mackinac, 31 December 1845, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>22</sup> Post Council of Administration Books, Fort Gibson, 1845-57; Fort Ridgely, 1853-59, Ibid.

In addition to his nominal tax and position with limited competition, the sutler was protected by the post council in extending credit to military personnel. A portion of the monthly post council meetings was normally spent in auditing the sutler's accounts wherein claims were made against the pay and effects of deserters or deceased soldiers. In either case, after the individual's escape by one means or the other, the sutler had first claim on the man's back pay and allowances. If the amount due was insufficient to meet his bills, the deceased or deserted soldier's clothes and personal effects were sold at a public auction on the post. If the funds from pay and clothing still failed to satisfy the sutler's account, the remaining portion of the debt was paid from the post fund. The sutler was guaranteed his back debts even if a deserter was captured, sentenced, fined, and imprisoned. Indeed, the sutler's monthly payment was assured priority before government fines were deducted. Ordinarily, sutlers did not extend unlimited credit to enlisted men or to junior officers. The latter in addition received meagre salaries and were liable to frequent transfers.<sup>23</sup>

By using surviving records of various post councils and drawing on the imagination, something of the atmosphere

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<sup>23</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, 1 May 1841, Ibid.

of the sutler's shop can be recaptured. In reading the lists of entries in the journal of the post council of administration at Fort Mackinac, Michigan, one can follow a group of officers as they inspected the sutler's store during the afternoon of September 18, 1843. The list of entries not only indicates the specific items available to post personnel, but also suggests the haphazard arrangement of goods on shelves, in boxes, and in barrels throughout the store. Here and there were barrels containing rough milled flour, soda crackers, almonds, apples (Baldwins and Jonathans), and in smaller kegs, molasses, brandy, whiskey, beer, wines, and cooking oils. Stacked on the counters or boxes were tubs of eggs, butter, and cheese. What a variety of shapes, colors, and aromas must have impressed themselves on a person upon entering the sutler's door: ground pepper, allspice, black and green teas, lemon syrup, raisins, currants, ginger, mustard, and castile soap all permeating the dustier odors of linens, muslin, velvet, silk, broadcloth, and wool yard goods. The latter were available in a variety of colors and patterns, and additional items for the seamstress included assorted buttons, yarns, threads, needles, pins, and measuring tapes. Ready-to-wear items included trousers, coats, shirts, leather gloves, "ladies' and gent's hose," shawls, and shoes. China cups, bowls, and plates, tumblers, cutlery, table linen, silverware, tables, chairs, bedsteads,

and cooking utensils were kept on hand for the prospective housewife. Scattered along the shelves was an array of shaving mugs, snuff sets, hunting knives, razors and straps, chamber pots with or without covers, coffee mills, violins selling for ten dollars without a bow or eleven dollars with it, a four keyed flute for six dollars plus fifty cents for an instruction book, trout lines, fish hook, French prints, "redding" combs, toothbrushes, playing cards, dice, school books, Bibles, bootblacking, smoked hams, and literally hundreds of other items.

There were a number of other important civilian workers at almost every military post, especially during the initial stages of construction. As previously mentioned, carpenters, masons, and mechanics were used to supplement and, sometimes, replace military manpower in building frontier posts. Until the 1840's the War Department was decidedly opposed to hiring civilian craftsmen to do work which soldiers could accomplish. However, in a number of instances, aggressive military commanders were able to insist upon using civilian labor in order to complete garrison buildings before cold weather stopped operations entirely. The necessity of using civilian workers increased as the

<sup>24</sup>

Ibid., 18 September 1843, Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>

Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 110.

frontier expanded and the burden of the soldiers' military work became heavier. Most forts constructed during the 1840's and 1850's were built by gangs of civilian craftsmen, who were aided by recruits in the role of unskilled workers. This arrangement was particularly common in the Southwest and along the Oregon Trail, where the concentration of troops was relatively light. However, with the greater use of civilian workers, there was a corresponding increase in construction costs.<sup>26</sup>

Most civilian workers were recruited in major urban areas and were transported into the wilderness at government expense to perform a particular job for a specific period of time, usually a year. Wages varied between two and three dollars a day according to the current market and demand for a particular manual skill. Usually master masons, carpenters, and mechanics were placed in instructors' positions to train and direct specific activities of military workers. While something resembling an apprentice system was used, overall planning and direction remained in the hands of Academy trained engineers.<sup>27</sup> In 1851 the widespread practice of employing civilian workers was drastically curtailed

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<sup>26</sup> Inspector Generals' Reports, 1830-36 and 1842, July, 1842, 251f, (old pagination), O.IGG.

<sup>27</sup> Lieutenant D. P. Woodbury to General J. Totten, 7 September 1849, typed MS. in Nebraska State Historical Society Library.



through a series of special orders from the Adjutant General's Office and the Department of the West. The general policy indicated that for reasons of economy all civilian employees would be dismissed, except where building and maintenance programs might be so changed as to be detrimental to the service. The same economy drive was also reflected in the resurrection of the subsistence farming programs, which were proposed the same year. In each case, commanding officers were requested to submit detailed reports concerning the financial status of their respective farming and non-military labor programs.

It was the general practice for military commanders to dismiss civilian workers with thirty days' notice, but in a few instances workers with special skills were retained to complete a particular building program. Lieutenant Colonel Dixon S. Miles, for example, received the permission and cooperation of the Department of the West in retaining several experienced Mexican carpenters and masons in the construction of new adobe quarters at Fort Fillmore, New Mexico Territory. Miles quite honestly admitted that American soldiers were not well enough acquainted with the proper methods and techniques of adobe construction, and, therefore, pointed out that the War Department could save

money by employing the more experienced workers.

In the post returns of Fort Arbuckle, Chickasaw Nation, is the record of a post order dismissing a carpenter and a mason, each of whom was being paid two dollars and fifty cents a day, plus one daily ration. At the same time, John Bushman, a Delaware interpreter, was dismissed in order to save the expense of his services at twenty-two dollars a month.<sup>30</sup>

Subsequently monthly reports indicate that the same carpenter and mason were hired from time to time at the same rate of pay, but on a part time basis. In September, 1854, eight civilian workers, including four carpenters, a mason, a wheelwright, an interpreter, and a blacksmith, were employed at the fort. Their combined salaries amounted to over \$350, which was spread over a three month period. Retrenchment came in January, 1855, when the building project was completed. All skilled workers were dismissed except two carpenters who were retained as teamsters. It was usually possible, with a local labor reservoir, to hire, dismiss, and rehire whenever the fits of government economy made it necessary.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from construction personnel, the army generally

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Lieutenant Colonel D.S. Miles to Colonel W.W.S. Bliss, 26 November 1851, Ibid.

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Post Returns, Fort Arbuckle, September, 1851, microfilm copy in Oklahoma Historical Society Library.

31

Ibid., September, 1854; January, 1855.

hired civilian teamsters. Some drivers, such as Percival Lowe, were former enlisted men who were familiar with military regulations and conditions. <sup>32</sup> Whenever possible, skilled enlisted men were assigned to blacksmiths' positions, with a rating somewhat higher than that of corporal. A crisis could easily develop when a farrier's term of enlistment was about to expire and no replacement was available. In such cases, departmental commanders gave unqualified consent to hire civilians to do the work for as much as ninety dollars a month, in order to maintain the effectiveness of the animals used for frontier pursuit and transportation. <sup>33</sup>

Some indication of the refinements of civilization can be seen at a number of military posts in the presence of garrison or regimental tailors. When Mrs. John Kinzie, the Winnebago Agent's wife, needed a riding habit, she called upon the regimental tailor who also served as cook in one of the company mess halls. Mrs. Kinzie supplied the material and thread from the sutler's store, and the cook supplied the skilled labor. He worked in her living room, where he sat cross-legged on a large table. For several days he alternately sewed and rushed to his kitchen to reassure

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Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 182.

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Lieutenant J. P. Roy to Major J. McKinstry, 22 July 1860, typed MS. of Fort Kearny Day Book in Nebraska Historical Society Library.

himself that his replacement was not poisoning the troops. Elsewhere post councils of administration established the economic conditions under which tailors and shoe makers could operate on military reservations. In 1840, labor charges for making a pair of summer weight trousers at Fort Gibson started at fifty cents. Wool trousers, vests, and jackets were a dollar each. Frock coats and uniform jackets were made for four dollars, while overcoats cost five. All other work including ladies' and children's garments, were calculated at the rate of one dollar per day. During the same year, the price for making a pair of boots was set at two dollars and fifty cents, while a pair of shoes cost only a dollar.

Fifteen years later the post council at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota set the price of trousers at one dollar and fifty cents a pair and vests at one dollar and twenty-five cents. Tailoring charges for other items increased only slightly over the 1840 prices. One major change occurred, however; prices for repairing various items of clothing were figured as fractions of a dollar, rather than on the basis of a dollar a day. Button holes were repaired for three cents each, pants reseated for thirty-seven and a half cents, and coats

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Kinzie, Wau-Bun, 104.

35

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 12 February 1840, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

remodeled for sixty-two and a half cents. Children's and ladies' clothing prices were generally about one half the cost of men's items. On the other hand, the price for a pair of boots increased to five dollars, and the cost of making a pair of shoes jumped to two dollars and seventy-five cents. Repair prices ranged from a ten cent patching job to one dollar and twenty-five cents for half soles and heels. Children's and ladies' shoe prices were only twenty-five to fifty cents less expensive than men's dress shoes.<sup>36</sup>

A number of army officers and Indian agents attached to military posts used domestic help, whom they hired as servants or owned as slaves. When Mrs. John Kinzie arrived at Fort Winnebago in 1830 without having obtained a servant, Mrs. David E. Twiggs, wife of the commanding officer, loaned Mrs. Kinzie one of her hired colored girls. The Twiggs' had hired several Negro girls in New York City and had transported them to Fort Winnebago to use until river transportation opened the following spring, at which time it was expected that Mrs. Twiggs' personal slaves could be transported from her former home in the South.<sup>37</sup> Most officers were paid a monthly allowance with which to maintain one or more servants as well as a number of horses. It was possible for a man

<sup>36</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, 28 February 1855, Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Kinzie, Wau-Bun, 104.

then with a family to reduce his needs in the matter of horses and yet be able to have permanent domestic help on an army allowance.<sup>38</sup> A number of southern born officers solved their respective servant problems by taking their slaves with them from post to post. Lieutenant Jefferson Davis was usually accompanied by his man Pemberton during his service at western military stations, including Fort Winnebago.<sup>39</sup>

Probably the most famous servant to appear in military circles was Dred Scott, whose residence in Illinois and Wisconsin was the basis for his suit for freedom in 1856. Scott served Dr. John Emerson at Fort Armstrong, Illinois, and Fort Snelling, Wisconsin Territory, in 1836. While at the latter post Dr. Emerson purchased a Negress, named Harriet, from Major Lawrence Taliaferro. Harriet shortly became Dred Scott's wife. Surgeon Emerson was transferred to Jefferson Barracks in 1837, but he did not take his slaves with him. For a year or two after Dr. Emerson's departure, Dred and Harriet hired out as domestic help for officers' families around Fort Snelling. The Scotts rejoined the Emersons in 1839 at Jefferson Barracks, but after Dr. Emerson's death in 1843, they were separated. Mrs. Emerson allowed her brother, Captain Henry Bainbridge, to take Dred with him to various

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<sup>38</sup>

American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 802.

<sup>39</sup>

Vincent G. Hopkins, Dred Scott's Case (New York, 1951), 5.

posts in Missouri, Michigan, and Texas. At the outbreak of the Mexican War, Bainbridge returned Dred to Mrs. Emerson in St. Louis.<sup>40</sup> The same Major Taliaferro who had sold Harriet to Dr. Emerson had inherited several other Negro slaves whom he hired to various officers at Fort Snelling. Taliaferro refused to sell any of his slaves; not even to the commanding officer, Major Joseph Plympton, to whom Taliaferro explained that the slaves would be freed eventually.<sup>41</sup>

Occasionally, situations involving servants and slaves were mentioned in official military correspondence. An impasse occurred at Fort Washita, Chickasaw Nation, in the summer of 1847. In the dark of night a sentry shot and killed a Negro servant boy who belonged to Dr. Fullwood, the post surgeon. After a board of survey investigated the incident, the commanding officers, Major George Andrews, reported to the headquarters of the Department of the West that the shooting had been judged accidental and that Dr. Fullwood had been recompensed for his loss from the post fund.<sup>42</sup> In the spring of 1848 a case involving a former

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<sup>40</sup>

Ibid., 6ff.

<sup>41</sup>

Edward D. Neill, "Occurrences in and around Fort Snelling from 1814-1840," Collections of the State Historical Society of Minnesota, II (1889), 115.

<sup>42</sup>

Major G. Andrews to Lieutenant F. F. Flint, 24 July 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

slave was settled by officers at headquarters of the Western Division. Captain Henry W. Wharton applied for a leave of absence and, at the same time, requested permission for his wife to take a hired servant with them to Philadelphia. The servant in question had been granted her freedom when she obtained sanctuary with General Thomas Jesup's forces during the Seminole Campaigns in Florida in 1838. Lieutenant Franklin F. Flint, Assistant Adjutant General of the Western Division, observed that a serious question concerning the woman's status might arise during the journey to the East in passing through a number of southern states. Despite the fact that the woman was half-Seminole and half-Negro, she still could be classified as a Negro slave by some authorities. A decision was finally reached when Flint declared that inasmuch as no suit of ownership had been filed during the previous ten year period and since the Whartons had been paying the woman a salary as a servant, it would be permissible for the servant to accompany them on their furlough.<sup>43</sup>

It has been suggested above that the frontier post was not entirely a man's world. It is true that garrison life in its technical aspects was dominated by men, but the daily life in its social and more genteel aspects was indeed influenced by women. Many important decisions, including

<sup>43</sup>

Captain H. W. Wharton to Lieutenant F. F. Flint, 30 May 1848 and endorsement, Ibid.



the military career itself, were no doubt made on the basis of the presence or absence of the attentions of a particular woman. It was seriously suggested by one army surgeon that many men had joined the army because of a woman, either because she had refused him or because she had made him unhappy after marriage. More often, however, it was the presence and participation of women in garrison life that softened and brightened the rather harsh realities of the military experience.<sup>44</sup>

Ladies of the post most often entered the frontier picture as members of a family unit, that is as wives, daughters, or other relatives of army personnel. Contemporary nineteenth century accounts of visits to western posts usually make special mention of the wives and families of officers and enlisted men. George Catlin described the families of ten or fifteen officers at Fort Leavenworth in the 1830's as "a very pleasant little community, who sic are almost continually together in social enjoyment...."<sup>45</sup> The British triumvirate of Captain Marryat, Charles Murray, and George Featherstonhaugh always mentioned in their respective accounts of visits to western garrisons the kindness and hospitality with which they were received by officers' wives. The

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<sup>44</sup>

Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 37.

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Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 15.

conversations, the subtelties of good table manners, the well prepared meals, and after-dinner daning presented a sharp contrast to these and other travelers who ventured beyond the pale of civilization. Mrs. John Kinzie describes the pleasure with which she was received at Fort Winnebago by Major David E. Twiggs' wife in the early 1830's. For many months prior to Mrs. Kinzie's arrival, Mrs. Twiggs had been the only white woman at the post and for several hundred miles around.<sup>46</sup> Mrs. Kinzie brought all her household furnishings, including a piano, which remarkably changed the interior of an otherwise crude log hut. At the Kinzies, guests were served from china dinner plates, toasted with cut glass and bedded between sheets on a real mattress. By December, 1830, the ladies' circle at the fort was increased to three when a civilian physician and his wife migrated from Galena, Illinois.<sup>47</sup>

The arrival of single ladies at a wester post always caused a stir among the young unmarried officers. Two damsels became stranded at Fort Winnebago in October, 1832 when an unseasonable snow storm prevented their traveling to Chicago by way of Galena. Mrs. Kinzie was able to persuade them to spend the winter season at the post, where they achieved an amazing degree of popularity.<sup>48</sup> A number of

<sup>46</sup> Kinzie, Wau-Bun, 41f.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 450.

accidental meetings led eventually to matrimony, wherein the daughters and nieces of older officers became the wives of younger men at the same post. Several examples will illustrate the extent of the practice and at the same time will indicate the interrelationship of a number of military families. Lieutenant Jefferson Davis, while stationed at Fort Crawford, met the eldest daughter of his commanding officer, Zachary Taylor. The two young people fell in love and asked Taylor's permission to be married, but the old gentleman refused. According to legend, the Colonel refused because he thought younger military men were too insecure to be able to support a family. No daughter of his would be permitted to suffer the privations of western garrison life, as Mrs. Taylor apparently had done. Several years passed, during which time both Taylor and Davis were transferred to posts in the Southwest. Davis resigned in 1836 and traveled to Kentucky, where he secretly married Miss Sarah Taylor. The Davises were given a sugar plantation as a wedding present, but the hardships of frontier life in a malarial climate proved tragic. Both were stricken with fever during the first year, from which only Davis recovered. Ironically Colonel Taylor's two surviving daughters were allowed to marry military men. Ann McKall Taylor married Surgeon Robert Woods in 1839 and a few years later Mary Elizabeth, the youngest child, married Taylor's aide, Lieutenant Colonel

William W. S. Bliss.

Captain Randolph B. Marcy also played the part of domineering father in 1856-57 when he constantly discouraged his daughter, Mary Ellen, from marrying Lieutenant Ambrose P. Hill, whom she had met in Washington. Marcy objected to the marriage on economic grounds, because it seemed impossible for young people to exist on a Lieutenant's salary. In a series of letters, Marcy stressed the nomad nature of army life as well as relative poverty, but at the same time suggested that another suitor, George B. McClellan, was not objectionable at all. McClellan had accompanied Marcy on the Red River Expedition in 1852, but subsequently resigned to become chief engineer for the Illinois Central Railroad and later vice-president. Once Mary Ellen had been steered away from Hill, Marcy campaigned for his friend McClellan who, as a wealthier man with better prospects, was just as easy to like as a less wealthy man such as Hill. Mary Ellen finally became interested in McClellan and, in 1860, con-  
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sented to marry him.

Other military marriages occurred at western outposts with little or no fanfare. In 1836 at Fort Towson, Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Vose gave his daughter Charlotte in marriage to Lieutenant Thomas O. Barnwell. The ceremony was

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Neill, "Occurrences in and around Fort Snelling,"  
121.

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Hollon, Beyond the Cross Timbers, 192-197; 238.

performed by a local minister, the Reverend Alfred Wright. Unhappily, nine months after the wedding Mrs. Barnwell died, presumably in childbirth, and was buried at the Fort Towson cemetery.<sup>51</sup> During 1845, Major William Hoffman disposed of two daughters to fellow military men. In March, the Reverend Daniel McManus married Miss Cecelia Hoffman to Captain John B. S. Todd, and in August joined Miss Amelia Hoffman to Captain Edmund B. Alexander.<sup>52</sup>

In Chapter VI the major social aspects of garrison life are discussed in some detail, hence the woman's role of supervising social functions and of tactful arrangements for schools and churches herein are passed over lightly. However, before leaving the subject of wives and womenfolk, one remarkable characteristic regarding the presence of females at western military posts must be mentioned here: there was throughout the military world, especially among isolated western personnel, a profound yearning for home and family life. That feeling was definitely engendered by the loyalty and devotion of the young brides and mothers who accompanied their men from post to post. Toil, disease, and child-bearing claimed many lives during the pre-Civil War period. In 1841, at Fort Gibson, Lieutenant Daniel H. Rucker married

<sup>51</sup>

The Army and Navy Chronicle, II, March 3, 1836; III, October 20, 1836, West Search Room, National Archives.

<sup>52</sup>

Arkansas Intelligencer, March 22, 1845; September 6, 1845, microfilm copy in Oklahoma Historical Society Library.

Flora Coody, attractive niece of John Ross, a prominent Cherokee leader. Four years after the wedding Mrs. Rucker died, leaving her husband with the problem of caring for three young children. Because of her affiliation with the Cherokee nobility and with military life, Mrs. Rucker was interred at the Fort Gibson cemetery in June, 1845.<sup>53</sup>

Among high ranking army officers, there was the deep seated conviction that to maintain a trained and experienced group of officers, the comforts and pleasures of marriage should not be denied to new career officers. In many instances, commanding officers extended special favors to avoid depleting the officers' ranks and to be considerate at the same time. For example, in September, 1840, upon Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Cumming's strong recommendation, Lieutenant Thomas Larned was given an extended leave of absence. Larned had applied for a leave in order to transport his ailing family from Fort Gibson to his parents' home in Illinois. Larned indicated that he would resign from the service if the leave was not granted, inasmuch as his eldest child was expected to die from the effects of the river valley climate.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup>  
Cherokee Advocate, July 3, 1845, in Houghton Library, Harvard University. Grant Foreman fixes the time of Mrs. Rucker's death as late July and the number of her children as two, see Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 63.

<sup>54</sup>  
Colonel A. Cummings to General M. Arbuckle, 21 September 1840, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L. R.

On the other hand, leaves were frequently granted to officers to be able to transport their families to western military stations. During the building of Camp Des Moines in 1834, Lieutenant Colonel Stephen W. Kearny wrote to General Henry Atkinson that "I must have my wife and family here with me and must, early in the next month, take a leave of absence for a short time to bring them here.... I shall not leave until everything is a fair train and all work well advanced and the parties perfectly organized."<sup>55</sup>

Henry Coke, a British traveler, expressed his pleasure in being entertained by Captain and Mrs. Thomas G. Rhett at Fort Laramie during the summer of 1850. On Mrs. Rhett's presence in the West, Coke commented, "It seems the height of conjugal devotion on her part to give up all society and follow her husband to such a corner of the earth as this. The task of getting here is bad enough for most ladies, but being content to remain is a piece of amiability that may serve as a model for all."<sup>56</sup> A year later Sergeant Percival Lowe encountered Mrs. Rhett, with her two small children and a servant, traveling across the plains from Fort Laramie to Fort Leavenworth. Lowe and other dragoons escorted the lady in her muledrawn wagon for the remainder of her trip to

<sup>55</sup> Colonel S. W. Kearny to General H. Atkinson, 26 September 1834, Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Coke, A Ride over the Rocky Mountains, 156f.

Leavenworth, whence Captain Rhett had been transferred three months earlier.<sup>57</sup>

Ulysses S. Grant and Dr. Rodney Glisan each visited St. Louis at an early point in their respective military careers. Although their visits took place twenty years apart, the two, as young men, shared a common opinion that St. Louis was an excellent city where young officers could find entertainment, a change of scene, and beautiful young ladies, but that the experience was painfully expensive. Glisan commented that "the young ladies there are most accomplished coquettes, and turn the heads and break the hearts of almost every Second Lieutenant who chances to come this way."<sup>58</sup> At least one St. Louis lady was serious and devoted enough to accompany her husband, Lieutenant John W. Davidson, to Cantonment Burgwin, New Mexico in 1852. Mrs. Davidson, a celebrated beauty, remained at the post through a number of bloody Indian engagements and spent her time comforting the wounded enlisted men in the post hospital.<sup>59</sup>

Dr. Rodney Glisan formulated a relatively objective bachelor's opinion regarding army wives during his first years as a military surgeon in the West. He thought that

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<sup>57</sup>

Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 70.

<sup>58</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 15; Grant, Personal Memoirs, I, 8.

<sup>59</sup>

Brooks and Reeve, (eds.), Forts and Forays, 47; 55f.



such ladies, as wives of educated gentlemen, ought to be refined and elegant women basically. But, at the same time, he advised, they should possess some practical knowledge of housekeeping, especially cooking. On Glisan's army-wife scale, Mrs. Randolph B. Marcy as a "jewel of a lady," while others were classified as "gay butterflies of fashion, who love so well to flutter and flirt as ball-room belles." Glisan presumed that the latter type became disillusioned as army wives when they discovered that the rose covered cottage was only a log hut in the wilderness, where the average daily meal was built around pork and beans and where the usual visitors were wild Indians.<sup>60</sup>

The birth of a child was not an uncommon event at the frontier post, and certainly a baby's arrival was as inspiring and joyful then as it is today. Mrs. John Kinzie recorded that when a daughter was born to Major and Mrs. David E. Twiggs at Fort Winnebago in 1831, she "shed light and joy in at least two dwellings...and...it was hard to say who, among us all, was most proud of her."<sup>61</sup> The care and comfort of garrison mothers is well illustrated by the story of the Perry family at Fort Snelling during the 1840's. Mr. Perry, a Swiss immigrant, was hired by the army to raise cattle for the use of the garrison, but, when his animals

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<sup>60</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 53.

<sup>61</sup>

Kinzie, Wau-Bun, 137.

consistently damaged the government gardens, he was dismissed and ordered away. However, inasmuch as Mrs. Perry had gained a reputation as an expert "accoucheur," the order was rescinded when the ladies of the post raised a united voice of protest.<sup>62</sup>

Enlisted personnel appear to have been less fortunate in having official sanction and encouragement of marriage and family life while on duty in the West. In February, 1832, the Adjutant General's Office transmitted an order to all departments concerning the enlistment of married men. The circular pointed out that since quartering families with the troops had become so inconvenient and costly, in the future it would not be practical to attempt to recruit any married man with a family.<sup>63</sup> About the same time, however, the General Regulations provided that post and company funds could be appropriated for "immediate or temporary relief of indigent widows and orphans of officers and soldiers."<sup>64</sup> Such relief fell short of long range protection for the soldier's family. Consequently, the Secretary of War included in his report for 1836 an appeal for new legislation which would provide a permanent fund for the relief of

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<sup>62</sup>  
Neill, "Occurrences in and around Fort Snelling," 136.

<sup>63</sup>  
A.G.O. Circular, 3 February 1832, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>64</sup>  
War Department, General Regulations...1835, 86.

widows and orphans of officers and men of the regular army. The plan met the same fate as a current pension plan, so that a soldier's next of kin was forced to depend on the temporary expedient of the post fund or a special act of Congress.<sup>65</sup>

Throughout the period 1830-1860, members of various post councils of administration did their best to meet the needs of their comrades' widows. On May 1, 1841 the council at Fort Mackinac appropriated sixty dollars from the post fund for "the widow of the late Sergeant Cranston." Two months later an additional forty dollars was appropriated for the lady, but thereafter no mention was made of Mrs. Cranston's situation in the council's journal.<sup>66</sup> After 1847 the General Regulations omitted provisions that the post fund could be used to aid widows and orphans, possibly because of the high casualty rates during the Mexican War. The spirit and letter of the law was upheld in at least one instance, when an appropriation of fifty dollars to aid the widow of Captain James Anderson was vetoed by the commanding officer at Fort Ridgely in 1855.<sup>67</sup>

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American State Papers, Military Affairs, VI, 819.

<sup>66</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, 1 May 1841; 29 July 1841, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>67</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, 31 August 1855, Ibid.

Company and regimental laundresses made up a second important group of women at many frontier military establishments. The General Regulations provided that as many as four women per company of soldiers could be hired to do washing. The post council of administration was responsible for settling the unit prices for officers' and men's laundry. The regulations, incidentally, allowed one government ration per day for each laundress. Like the sutler, the laundress was given a space at the pay table where she could collect her bills under the scrutiny of the respective company commanders. Whenever military units were transferred from one post to another, the laundresses were usually permitted to accompany the troops so as not to lose their means of income. All acceptable women were issued certificates and traveling permits, though women of known bad character were denied official patronage.<sup>68</sup> For example, when Colonel Gustavus Loomis was moving his regiment from Fort Gibson to a new post in Texas in 1847, he informed departmental headquarters that he was taking with him the sutler, the regimental band, and laundresses from two companies "as well as the post laundress, who can't find enough work at Fort Gibson." Lieutenant Franklin F. Flint, departmental adjutant, thereupon made arrangements for the issuance of enough

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<sup>68</sup>  
 98. War Department, General Regulations...1857, 16;

certificates for ten laundresses to accompany the Loomis  
<sup>69</sup>  
 expedition.

Reports of inspecting officers and post councils indicate that laundresses usually were either wives of soldiers in units which they served or were widows of former soldiers. In 1834, for example, Captain George C. Hunter reported to General Henry Atkinson that laundresses' accommodations at Jefferson Barracks were generally in disorderly condition. Of the eight women whom Hunter found quartered on the post, only six were on the list of approved workers. Moreover, Hunter recommended that the two extra women and three of the approved workers should be quartered outside the post inasmuch as many complaints had been made by company commanders that several laundresses were "nuisances."<sup>70</sup>

The laundry rates established by the various post councils appear to reflect the average wage scale for unskilled labor at military posts. At the same time post councils appear to have made some distinction between officers and enlisted men, both in respect to salaries and habits of cleanliness. Laundresses at Fort Mackinac, in 1841, were authorized to charge fifty cents a month for

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Colonel G. Loomis to Lieutenant F. F. Flint, 27 March 1847 and endorsement, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

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Captain G. Hunter to General H. Atkinson, 21 August 1834, Ibid.

soldiers' laundry, while officers could be charged as much as two dollars. Blankets and overcoats were cleaned at the extra charge of twelve and a half cents apiece.<sup>71</sup> If there were fifty men and five officers per company with four laundresses to serve them, then each woman could earn about three dollars and twenty-five cents a month, a ration a day, and, usually, free living accommodations. By the same standards, during the 1840's privates earned about eight dollars a month and sergeants as much as twelve dollars. During the following decade the lot of the laundress improved slightly. In 1854 the post council at Fort Ridgely established laundry prices at seventy-five cents a month for enlisted men and three dollars a month for officers. Less than a year later, the council limited the enlisted man's laundry to a dozen items for the seventy-five cent fee. The price for washing blankets and overcoats, moreover, was increased to twenty-five cents apiece.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, there was one other category of women who were common to most military establishments. The presence and activities of prostitutes and camp followers can best be defined as a timeless, constant military problem. Yet,

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<sup>71</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, 11 November 1841, Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, 30 October 1854; 4 March 1855, Ibid.

perhaps, by the double ethical standards of the nineteenth century they were tolerated more than today. Women indigenous to the vicinity of the frontier forts, Indian maidens, squaws, and an assortment of half breeds, were probably amoral rather than immoral in respect to fraternization with the troops. It was quite natural that the nineteenth century soldier could be attracted by whatever womanly charms were available, just as his twentieth century counterpart noticed that the tawny South Pacific natives grew a few shades lighter day by day. In some instances, formal marriage contracts were solemnized, after which the women were accepted within the garrison circle. In most cases, however, the relationships between Indians and whites was of a temporary nature that lasted as long as a soldier was stationed at a particular post. Yet, many such informal ties were treated as binding as any civil or religious contract.<sup>73</sup>

A number of officers and men maintained mistresses away from their respective posts and at the same time had wives within the garrison or elsewhere in the United States. One chronicler has asserted that before troops were finally removed from Fort Snelling, Minnesota, only two officers did not maintain squaws in the forest. "Brown-bellied babies," too, were a natural corollary to such sylvan

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<sup>73</sup> George D. Lyman, John Marsh, Pioneer (Chautauqua, 1931), 59.

<sup>74</sup>romances. Sergeant James Bennett recorded an incident in Santa Fe when he was stationed at nearby Fort Marcy in 1854. One evening Bennett was attending a native fandango in the city, when he met one of his regimental officers. Bennett was shocked to see that the officer was accompanied by his mistress, by whom he had had two children. "The officer has a wife and family in the States. What do men think of themselves, and she, the woman, knowing to [sic] the fact?"<sup>75</sup>

Frequently, some scandal and violence would result from associations with camp followers. While stationed at Fort Gibson in the early 1840's, Lieutenant Charles Wickliffe usurped the affection of a civilian carpenter's Indian mistress. A triangle was quickly formed, when the carpenter chastized his wench, who in turn appealed to the Lieutenant for revenge. Wickliffe obliged by whipping the fellow, but, not being content with joint ownership, ambushed and killed the man a short time later. Court martial proceedings developed, and, as a result, Wickliffe was dropped from the army rolls.<sup>76</sup> In the spring of 1846 Fort Gibson was again the site of a minor sensation. Major Clifton Wharton formally charged Captain Eustace Trenor with a violation of the code of the officer and gentleman. During subsequent court martial

<sup>74</sup>

Ibid., 60f.

<sup>75</sup>

Brooks and Reeve, (eds.), Forts and Forays, 51.

<sup>76</sup>

Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, 174.



proceedings it developed that Trenor kept an Indian mistress in his quarters. The lady, one Marshee, was known around the fort as a drunkard and profligate. Trenor also was alleged to have disturbed the peace of the garrison with frequent, violent quarrels with Marshee, while both were intoxicated. Finally, Wharton charged that Trenor was allowing Corporal James Christopher to keep his Indian mistress in the kitchen of Trenor's cabin with Marshee.<sup>77</sup> Trenor apparently was acquitted with only a minor penalty, for in June, 1846, he was promoted to Major and was subsequently sent on recruiting service to New York City.<sup>78</sup>

According to the Cherokee Advocate "a bloody affray" developed in the vicinity of Fort Gibson in March, 1845 when two or three soldiers attached to Captain Nathaniel Boone's dragoon company were murdered at a house of ill-repute, operated near the garrison by one Polly Spaniard. The soldiers had gone to Miss Spaniard's for women and liquor, but were attacked by rival Cherokee suitors. The night after the affair, others of Boone's company allegedly raided the house, turned out the inmates, many of whom they whipped, and finally set fire to the building.<sup>79</sup> Several weeks after

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<sup>77</sup> Copy of Specification of Charges and Court Martial Proceedings against Captain E. Trenor, June, 1846, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>78</sup> In 1847, Trenor died at the age of forty-four in New York. Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, 133.

<sup>79</sup> Cherokee Advocate, March 13, 1845.

the incident a public meeting was held by members of the Cherokee Nation who drew up a petition to the United States government. The Cherokees demanded that all troops be removed from Fort Gibson in order to eliminate vice and immorality from the Cherokee Nation.<sup>80</sup>

The battle between civilian and military raged through the newspapers for months thereafter, but no official action was taken. An unnamed army officer defended the military's position in an open letter to the editor of the Cherokee Advocate, to whom he admitted that the presence of the military often inflated prices and did in certain instances lead to the establishment of dens of debauchery. On the other hand, the officer maintained that a more serious situation might develop if the area were not defended against the invasion of greedy white settlers or of bellicose Indian tribes from the West.<sup>81</sup> No answer was found, although the commanding officer at the post tried to keep his men from roaming by placing iron bars on all the windows and by locking them within the garrison at night.<sup>82</sup>

The army on the western frontier was independent only to a degree and that in purely military functions. But

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<sup>80</sup>

Ibid., March 27, 1845.

<sup>81</sup>

Letter reprinted in The Arkansas Intelligencer, April 26, 1845.

<sup>82</sup>

Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 66f.

for its existence on the national and local levels, it was dependent upon the good will and help of the American people. The presence and activity of civilians at frontier posts was a constant reminder that the United States was not a militarist state. The two groups worked together well, and often admirably under circumstances of stress. They both contributed their share to leisure time activities.

## CHAPTER VI

### LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES

Garrison life on the frontier during the nineteenth century was not composed entirely of military duties. While always on the alert for marauding Indians and outlaw whites, the frontier guardsmen looked forward to leisure time, without the advice of a psychiatrist. Guard duty, road building, and post repairs were accomplished as all in a day's work; but after hours, or on Sundays and holidays, a soldier relied on his own ingenuity or that of his comrade to make the idle hours pass more quickly. Some men, of course, were from rural areas and knew well what life was like beyond the pale of civilization. Others, however, were immigrants or former city dwellers to whom the isolation of the frontier was a new experience and for whom, sooner or later, the thrill of adventure in the "Far West" wore a bit thin.

Good weather, especially in the spring and fall, provided many opportunities for outdoor action. Hunting, fishing, riding, horse racing, and shooting matches offered a busman's holiday for enlisted men and officers alike. The lure of field and stream had been a part of American

life for generations. Although hunting afoot or on horseback may be considered a gentleman's sport, to most frontiersmen, whether in uniform or buckskin, it provided the necessities of life. Wild game usually was the only type of fresh meat on which men subsisted for many months, for the quartermaster supplies of salted pork and bacon were frequently damaged in transit and were rendered inedible.<sup>1</sup>

Game was usually both abundant and varied on the frontier. Charles Fenno Hoffman, the American writer and editor of the New York American, visited Fort Crawford, Wisconsin, in 1832 and discovered that grouse, snipe, and duck were plentiful in the vicinity of the garrison. Bigger game, such as elk, bear, and wolf usually necessitated a trip of some distance from the post, and the officers made frequent ones to supplement government rations.<sup>2</sup> In 1835 Charles A. Murray, a British geologist, visited the same post and wrote that he accompanied a party of army officers on a hunting expedition to the headwaters of the Turkey River in the course of which they found pheasant, deer, elk, and other game in great abundance.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Philip St. George Cooke, Scenes and Adventures in the Army (Philadelphia, 1857), 56; see also Major C. Wharton to Colonel R. Jones, 7 July 1837, A.G.O., Letters Received.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Fenno Hoffman, A Winter in the West (New York, 1835), II, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, Travels in North America, II, 110f.

Buffalo was common game in the Kansas and Nebraska territories and could be found in great numbers along the river bottoms. While stationed at Fort Kearny in 1854, Eugene Bandel, a German immigrant who joined the army for a job, often hunted the animals on foot. He reported that on many days the beasts were "as numerous as the stars in the heavens."<sup>4</sup> However, there was some controversy as to the best methods of hunting buffalo. Dr. Rodney Glisan, post surgeon at Fort Washita in 1850, recorded that he preferred hunting buffalo on horseback, since his first shot usually just wounded the animal and made a chase across the prairie inevitable.<sup>5</sup> Francis Parkman, on the other hand, hunted near Fort Laramie during the same period and noted that approaching the animal on foot was far safer than risking one's life or horse in a chase. Parkman apparently observed something of buffalo psychology for he concluded that the buffalo was a fickle animal, whose mood alternated between stupidity and wariness. To be prepared for either situation, the historian advised stalking the game with extreme skill and caution.<sup>6</sup>

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Bandel, Frontier Life in the Army, 79.

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Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 61f.

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Francis Parkman, The Oregon Trail (Garden City, 1948), 28f.

During the mid nineteenth century, hunting was a common practice of the military, regardless of the geographic location. In the vicinities of Forts Laramie, Snelling, and Crawford large game such as elk, deer, and buffalo was as abundant as the prairie hen and duck.<sup>7</sup> Buffalo was the most common large game farther South in the central frontier area which included Forts Kearny, Scott, Leavenworth, Gibson, and Washita, but geese, wild turkey, prairie chicken and grouse were also numerous and even more palatable.<sup>8</sup> In the Southwest, game was sparse but not lacking. Mountain sheep, deer, and possum were present, but the prairie hen and duck actually provided more opportunities for hunting according to Dr. Caleb Kennerly. The latter traveled to California in 1853, during which time he accompanied a group of officers duck hunting in the vicinity of Fort Conrad, New Mexico.<sup>9</sup>

Visitors to western posts enjoyed hunting as much as the station garrisons. George Catlin, the American artist, visited Fort Leavenworth during the 1830's where he joined a number of garrison parties for deer and grouse hunts. One

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<sup>7</sup> Hafen and Young, Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 143.

<sup>8</sup> Grant Foreman, Fort Gibson (Norman, 1936), 14; Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 56; Bandel, Frontier Life in the Army, 79.

<sup>9</sup> Diary of a Journey to California, 1853-54 in the Caleb Burwell Rowan Kennerly Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

afternoon he and an officer companion achieved some notoriety and local fame in bagging seventy-five grouse through orthodox and unorthodox practices. During a part of the hunt, the two men had the aid of an experienced pointer, who flushed a bird here and there. Later in the day, Catlin and his companion took advantage of a prairie grass fire which drove flocks of grouse toward them at such low altitudes that each burst frequently dropped five or six birds. <sup>10</sup>

While Catlin, Hoffman, Kennerly, and Murray traveled through the West for purposes other than hunting, Sir George Gore used Fort Laramie as a private hunting lodge in 1854. As a precursor of the sportsman-hunter who traversed the plains on horseback or in a railway carriage after the Civil War, Sir George descended upon the military with private entourage that would have rivaled any pioneer wagon train in size. His Irish rent roll was large enough to allow him to start his western safari with twenty-one carts, six wagons, twelve yoke of oxen, over a hundred horses, fourteen hunting dogs, forty servants, and the best European rifles. Sir <sup>11</sup> George found the hunting stimulating.

In the style of such a country gentleman, many army officers went to great lengths to supply themselves with the

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<sup>10</sup>

Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 16.

<sup>11</sup>

Coutant, History of Wyoming, I, 325.



best of equipment, including well trained, highly bred hunting dogs. Captain George McCall, in a letter to his brother, waxed poetic on the many hours he spent hunting with blooded setters and fine horses near Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1844.<sup>12</sup>

In 1850 Henry Coke, a British traveler, paused en route to California at Fort Laramie where he hunted with Captain Thomas G. Rhett. The latter's sporting blood appeared when a pack of greyhounds seriously wounded a badger. Rather than let the dogs maul the animal for their savage amusement, Rhett killed it with a hunting knife, then continued the hunt.<sup>13</sup> Dogs were like members of the family sometimes.

When Colonel Stephen W. Kearny was transferred to Fort Leavenworth in 1838, he left his dogs at Fort Gibson. In an official letter to Major Clifton Wharton, who commanded at Fort Gibson, Kearny requested that his dogs be forwarded to him by the government express and mail service. So valuable were they that Kearny enjoined Wharton to instruct the express rider to lead the dogs all the way and not to lose them.<sup>14</sup> So much a part of hunting were the dogs that in one instance two setters which had been stolen from Lieutenant Colonel Pitcairn Morrison were recovered by a military

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George A. McCall, Letters from the Frontier (Philadelphia, 1868), 420.

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Coke, A Ride over the Rocky Mountains, 157.

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Colonel S. W. Kearny to Major C. Wharton, 17 January 1838, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

reconnaissance. A special expedition was sent into the Cherokee Nation not far from Fort Smith to rescue the dogs which were shipped by steamer to Fort Gibson, where Morrison<sup>15</sup> was in command.

A number of legendary characters of Bunyanesque stature have been created from the many colorful figures of army officers on the frontier. Stories about the exploits of Captain Martin Scott, who un-treed a raccoon merely with his reputation, never seem to fade with each retelling. An excellent marksman, Scott was also an avid hunter and served as the epitome of the unexcelled sportsman throughout the West. When at Fort Snelling in the 1830's, Scott was reputed to have possessed a pack of twenty to twenty-five hunting dogs and a number of fine horses, which he used in the vast<sup>16</sup> hunting ground between Fort Snelling and Fort Crawford.

Apart from the recreational and nutritional benefits, there was an extrinsic value in hunting which was recognized by several experienced army officers. The nineteenth century military training program was confined to the rudiments of formal drill in both the militia and regular army. The business of being a soldier, however, had to be learned by

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<sup>15</sup>  
Lieutenant J. Potter to Lieutenant Colonel P. Morrison, 23 April 1854, Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>  
J. F. Williams, "Memoir of Captain Martin Scott," Collections of the State Historical Society of Minnesota, III (1905), 183.

trial and error in camp, field, and battle. Except for the manual of army, little attention was given to the handling of weapons, especially marksmanship. Many a shot was wasted in hunting table game when the weapon was in the hands of an untrained recruit. This was not altogether the fault of garrison and regimental commanders, who suffered inwardly and outwardly every time Congress pared military appropriations and indirectly affected the supply of expendable ammunition. Colonel Randolph B. Marcy advocated the encouragement of non-compulsory military hunting as a training device for both officers and enlisted men. As a leisure time activity, Marcy hoped that hunting would divert the soldier's attention from less worthy habits which often led to moral and physical degradation. "The successful hunter," he wrote, "as a general rule, is a good shot, will always charge his gun properly, and may be relied upon in action."<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Rodney Glisan added his sentiments to those of Marcy in stating that he thought it a mistaken economy of the government to keep soldiers working most of the time building barracks and military roads when attention ought to have been given to military tactics and the art of shooting well. In 1854 Glisan suggested, "If the government desires to expend as little as possible on the army, let her adopt a plan of organizing among the troops hunting parties instead of

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<sup>17</sup>

Randolph B. March, Thirty Years of Army Life on the Border (New York, 1866), 283.

fatigue duties, whose duty shall be to supply the garrison with fresh meat."<sup>18</sup> Such visionary thinking seems to have borne fruit, for three years later Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke was able to write, "Hunting was a military duty, done by detail, parties of fifteen or twenty going out with a wagon. They threw out three or four hunters, and remained under arms for the purposes of protecting them...."<sup>19</sup>

Fishing, like hunting, provided both a change of scene and diet. Wherever there was a flowing river or a placid lake, Waltonian devotees cast their lines for the pleasure and the profit of just plain fishing. Almost every military post west of the Mississippi River was located on a stream or lake in order to take advantage of a natural means of transportation and to secure an adequate supply of water for men and animals. Almost invariably it was found that these same rivers and lakes contained an abundant variety of edible fish, ranging from the small perch to the grotesque catfish. Eugene Bandel records spending a pleasant day on the banks of the Kansas River in the summer of 1855 near Fort Riley, where he and several companions caught "a mess of fish" which weighed over a hundred pounds.<sup>20</sup> Charles Murray observed that the local settlers in the vicinity of

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<sup>18</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 54.

<sup>19</sup>

Cooke, Scenes and Adventures in the Army, 56.

<sup>20</sup>

Bandel, Frontier Life in the Army, 75.

Fort Leavenworth caught catfish which weighed as much as fifty pounds each and which were sold to the garrison cooks. Indeed, the catfish was an edible dish for most westerners, but Catlin found its taste rather flat.<sup>21</sup> Paradoxically, most sutlers seem to have included along with their stock of quality tinned fish a good supply of trout lines and fish hooks for the hopeful anglers at their respective military posts.<sup>22</sup>

Though hunting was considered the principal sport among frontier military men, horse racing proved to be a close second. Most racing was of an informal nature, similar to the shooting exhibitions wherein the participants looked for mutual entertainment and a chance to demonstrate superior horse flesh or shooting skill. Officers frequently purchased Indian ponies which were more accustomed to the rough prairies than their riders. Many times on a hunt a challenge for an impromptu race would be issued. To the thrill of racing, of course, was added the opportunity of chancing a bet on this or that horse. In many cases a purse was awarded to the owner of the winning horse, following the well established custom at Eastern resort areas.<sup>23</sup> One of the chief forms

<sup>21</sup>

Murray, Travels in North America, I, 252f.

<sup>22</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, Sutler's Inventory, 31 December 1841, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>23</sup>

Hildreth, Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains, 55; see also Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 64.

of entertainment during the fall season at Fort Gibson was attending the annual races at a specially constructed track about a hundred yards from the post. In 1844, the Fort Gibson Jockey Club was formed with Pierce M. Butler, the Cherokee Indian Agent, as president, and races were run through the last weeks in September.<sup>24</sup>

Major Ethan Allen Hitchcock noted that the fever for betting and racing was so great at Fort Gibson in 1841 a dinner party was delayed several hours so that his host, the post sutler, could attend the races. The ground was so frozen at the time that a harrow was drawn over the track to make it possible for the horses to run. At dinner later all the guests, including the ladies, talked of nothing but the afternoon races. Hitchcock dismally observed that despite the fact that several ladies and gentlemen had lost gloves, watches, and money in their betting mania, they were cheerful about it.<sup>25</sup> During the following year, while Hitchcock was still stationed at Fort Gibson, horse racing remained the vogue, whereupon he was moved to remark caustically in his diary: "There have been races here today attended by everybody from the commanding officer and his lady down to the verriest blackguards in the country. Two common horses, so far as I can hear and both owned by a professional gambler...

<sup>24</sup>Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, 175.<sup>25</sup>Foreman, (ed.), A Traveller in Indian Territory,

The sutler, Arnold Harris, bet \$500 and, true, he happened to win, but how can a sutler hope to prosper who is in the habit of betting on all the horse races...."<sup>26</sup> Colonel Richard B. Mason, commander at Fort Gibson at the time and a staunch moralist, evidently became displeased with conditions, for a short time later he issued an order barring gamblers and loafers from the post and prohibiting horse racing on the military reservation.<sup>27</sup>

Horse racing at tracks near Fort Smith and Van Buren, Arkansas, were regularly advertised in The Arkansas Intelligencer, wherein the number of heats, names and ages of horses, and purses were printed one month in advance of the fall season.<sup>28</sup> Major Hitchcock visited the Fort Smith area in 1841 prior to his investigations at Fort Gibson. He recorded in his diary that a number of officers and their ladies became quite drunk at a steamboat warming which he attended. The officers in question had started their celebrating at Van Buren where they attended the fall races. Hitchcock considered that strong drink and horse racing led to a decadent way of life, which he studiously avoided.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>28</sup> The Arkansas Intelligencer, August 28, 1839.

<sup>29</sup> Foreman, (ed.), A Traveller in Indian Territory,

Riding for exercise and amusement was thought to be of considerable value by many officers who served on the frontier. General U. S. Grant, for example, attributed his miraculous recovery from a severe cough or possible consumption to daily horseback rides while he was stationed at Fort Jesup, Louisiana, in 1844.<sup>30</sup> Many travelers and visitors in the West found that their hosts and hostesses were very happy to escort them around the environs of the military post, but that their conducted tours required a certain degree of horsemanship. George Catlin observed during his visit to Fort Leavenworth in the 1830's that the wives and daughters of many officers enjoyed the open spaces and fresh air as much as did the men. They would spend hours outdoors on horseback or in carriages riding over the plains or going on picnics.<sup>31</sup> While traveling through Wisconsin territory in the early 1840's, George W. Featherstonhaugh, an eminent British geologist, was extremely pleased when his hostess at Fort Snelling, the wife of Major John Bliss, insisted on joining Featherstonhaugh and her husband on a brisk ride from the fort to the Falls of the St. Anthony.<sup>32</sup>

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Grant, Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, I, 35.

<sup>31</sup>

Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 145.

<sup>32</sup>

Featherstonhaugh, A Canoe Voyage up the Minnaya Sotar, II, 16.



The presence of Indians near military establishments did not always mean danger in the pre-Civil War period. Indeed, at treaty conferences held at western garrisons, on national holidays, and at annuity payments Indians usually could be persuaded to engage in a sport commonly known as "Indian Ball Play." The game, like modern lacrosse, was played with a hard ball about the size of an orange and with long handled sticks on the ends of which were small wicker cups. The number of players on each team varied according to how many could be mustered for any game. Women's teams likewise were organized, particularly when a visitor at an annuity payment wanted to see the native maul one another for a pile of useless trinkets and a few yards of gaudy colored cloth. The games were colorful spectacles, but were as tiring to the spectators as to the players, for such sport often lasted four or more hours, and even all day.<sup>33</sup> Apparently the thrills and excitement were as great as at a modern, professional baseball game. For one young officer, the attraction was so great that he ruined his military career. In August, 1840, Lieutenant John B. Peyton requested permission from his commanding officer to attend an Indian ball game at the Choctaw Agency near Fort Smith, Arkansas. Major William Belknap refused, but Peyton left the post and

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Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 145; see also Marryat, A Diary in America, II, 80.

attended the game. Upon returning to the fort that night, the Lieutenant was placed under arrest, confined to his quarters, and later court martialed. In November, 1840, he was dropped from the army register.<sup>34</sup>

Gambling at cards and billiards have been long standing pastimes for army men and the mid-nineteenth century was no exception. At Fort Atkinson, Iowa, the post sutler operated a billiard room adjacent to his store for the convenience of officers and men.<sup>35</sup> Unlike modern military recreation facilities, game rooms were not an integral part of the nineteenth century army post, at least not in the eyes of the Adjutant General's Office. In 1835 General Roger Jones called upon General Mathew Arbuckle to account for the inclusion of a billiard room in the architectural drawings of Fort Gibson which the latter had submitted to the War Department. General Arbuckle explained at some length that the game room had been constructed with funds collected by the officers of the Seventh Infantry Regiment which was stationed at the post.<sup>36</sup>

Three years later the subject of the Fort Gibson billiard table again appeared in official correspondence.

<sup>34</sup>

Major W. G. Belknap to Lieutenant G. Simmons, 28 August 1840, Records of Army Commands, Dept. of West, L.R.; Heitman, Historical Register, I, 787.

<sup>35</sup>

Wesley, "Life at a Frontier Post," 207.

<sup>36</sup>

General M. Arbuckle to General R. Jones, 12 February 1835, Fort Gibson Letter Book, Photostatic copy in Oklahoma Historical Society Library.

Captain Eustace Trenor registered a formal complaint that Lieutenant Philip St. George Cooke had been playing billiards so often during the day that he was falling behind in his official duties. Trenor flatly stated that he definitely was unwilling to do the work of two men when the other was still physically capable of carrying his share.<sup>37</sup> The subject of billiards seems to have been the bete noire of army officialdom, for in 1851 Colonel Samuel Cooper admonished Colonel William Harney for transporting a billiard table in an army ambulance from Fort Washita, Choctaw Nation, to Austin, Texas. Colonel Harney defended his actions, quite logically, on grounds of economy stating that when his regiment was transferred to Austin the ambulance would have carried only a half load on the march and that he was merely protecting regimental property.<sup>38</sup>

Card playing, especially when money was involved, was condemned by the more Puritanical members of nineteenth century society. The modernists among the officers and most of the enlisted men found the game an excellent use of leisure time on an otherwise dull evening. While usually there were post regulations against card playing "for keeps," payday

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Captain E. Trenor to Lieutenant Colonel R. Mason, 10 August 1838, Fort Gibson Register of Letters Sent, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

38

Colonel W. S. Harney to Lieutenant Colonel W.W.S. Bliss, 26 August 1851, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

was commonly spent in a feverish exchange of money. James Bennett, a dragoon stationed at Rayado, New Mexico, tells of one such evening in 1851 when "Money changed hands as fast as possible. Up jumped one cursing himself, his parents, his God, for his evil fortune.... Morning found many still gambling. Lost their sleep and their money."<sup>39</sup> The philosophic Major E. A. Hitchcock, previously mentioned, was much chagrined after a belated dinner that his host, Arnold Harris, set up card tables for the evening's entertainment. The ladies withdrew to an adjacent room, he noted, but could be observed at their own games. When the men switched from euchre to draw poker, Hitchcock went to his room where he found solace in his flute and philosophical treatises by Kant.<sup>40</sup> Captain U. S. Grant, on the other hand, enjoyed cards and confessed in a letter to a fellow officer, "I continued to play brag some after you left and won considerable, but for some time back I have not played and probably will never play again -- no resolution though!"<sup>41</sup>

Because of the obvious temptation in handling large sums of money, the General Regulations stated that "...officers charged with the disbursement of public moneys are

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<sup>39</sup>

Brooks and Reeve, (eds.), Forts and Forays, 22.

<sup>40</sup>

Foreman, (ed.), A Traveller in Indian Territory, 32.

<sup>41</sup>

Hardin, "Four Forgotten Frontier Posts in Western Louisiana," 145.

strictly prohibited from playing cards, or games of hazard  
 ...."<sup>42</sup> That the pitfall was real is illustrated by the  
 case of Lieutenant Thomas Johnson, who was assistant quarter-  
 master for the Seventh Infantry Regiment at Fort Gibson in  
 1834. Johnson was sent to departmental headquarters at New  
 Orleans to cash \$20,000 in public drafts, but stopped long  
 enough at Little Rock, Arkansas, to enjoy a series of card  
 games and horse races. When eventually apprehended, Johnson  
 had lost more than half of the money.<sup>43</sup> Ironically, playing  
 cards and dice could be purchased at the sutler's store at  
 most forts, despite regulations against gambling.<sup>44</sup>

In many instances the post or regimental library  
 served to fill an otherwise idle hour for the frontier sol-  
 dier, although such pastime obviously was not as exciting as  
 hunting or games of chance. In addition to the best in  
 fiction and non-fiction, the soldier could find a number of  
 magazines and newspapers through which he could catch up on  
 "recent" happenings in the East and abroad. This mark of  
 civilization and refinement was found at most permanent and

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<sup>42</sup>

War Department, General Regulations...1841, 394.

<sup>43</sup>

General M. Arbuckle to General R. Jones, 16  
 November 1834, Fort Gibson Letter Book, 1834-36, Oklahoma  
 Historical Society Library.

<sup>44</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac,  
 Michigan, 1840-48, passim, Records of Army Commands, Depart-  
 ment of the West.

some temporary western military stations. The function of establishing a post library was the responsibility of the post councils of administration, which met at least once a month.

The post council was a relatively powerful unit and included the commanding officer and the next three officers below him in rank, one of which could be the post surgeon. The major responsibilities of the council were to prescribe the type and quantity of clothing for the troops, to secure miscellaneous small equipment, to elect a sutler, to select a chaplain, and to administer the post fund. The latter usually was accumulated through savings accrued by baking bread on the post (rather than purchasing it locally) and from the monthly tax on the sutler. Possible areas of disbursement included: relief for widows, orphans, and disabled soldiers; payments to the chaplain for religious and school instruction; purchase of instruments for the band; seeds for the garden; and books for the library.<sup>45</sup>

The proceedings of various councils of administration indicate that a considerable portion of the monthly budget was appropriated for books, newspapers, and periodicals. An initial expenditure of \$150 for books and an additional \$30 for magazines was not uncommon. The post council at Fort Gibson, in 1845, voted \$75.50 for 171 volumes of

<sup>45</sup>

War Department, General Regulations...1841, 31f.

Harper's Family Library, \$45.85 for 36 volumes of Harper's Classical Library, and \$4.00 each for Brande's Encyclopedia of Literature, Science and Art; McCulloch's Geographical Dictionary; and Napier's History of the Peninsular War. Additional amounts were appropriated for the North American Review, Blackwood's Magazine, The Cherokee Advocate, The United States Service Journal, The Democratic Review, Knickerbocker, The Southern Literary Messenger, the Boston Courier, the Boston Statesman, and the Arkansas Gazette.<sup>46</sup> Some years later periodical subscriptions were augmented by The National Intelligencer, The Baltimore Sun, The Missouri Republican, Littel's Living Age, and Harper's Weekly -- all for \$30 a year.<sup>47</sup>

A similar and somewhat more complete library collected was acquired by the post council at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, 1853-59. The collection included a wide variety of monthly magazines, including Harper's, Graham's, and Putnam's also the London Punch, Illustrated News, French Charivan L'Illustration, and the Illustrated Zeitung. The list of books may have been a bit heavy reading for the average soldier, but no doubt it measured up to the standards of many of the officers. On law, the library contained The

<sup>46</sup>  
Post Journal, Fort Gibson, 1845-57, Quarterly expenditures, 1845, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>47</sup>  
Ibid., 30 April, 1852.

Story of the Constitution of the United States, Blackstone's Commentaries, and Wheaton's International Law. Much of the rest of the collection was devoted to biography, including Irving's Life of Washington, Benton's Thirty Years' View, and Goodrich's Encyclopedia of Ancient and Modern Biography, and to general histories, including Hildreth's History of the United States, von Ranke's History of the Popes, and Lossing's Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution. In 1856 the council expended an additional \$150 for several works on history, biography, and literature, among which were Dicken's novels, the Waverly Novels, the Complete Works of Washington Irving, and a collection of sea adventure stories<sup>48</sup> by W. W. Collins.

The library at Fort Mackinac prior to the Civil War seems to have been given over to periodicals and newspapers, judging from the extensive list of subscription orders approved by the post council. Newspapers from New York, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., plus the leading literary and political magazines of the United States and England were authorized for purchase by the council for terms of six months to a year. Many interests were represented in the collection, which included such diverse items

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Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, 1853-59, 1 September 1855; 1 November 1856, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.



as the Army and Navy Chronicle for the professionals, The Spirit of the Times for the general reader, The Southern Literary Messenger for the literati, and The Journal of the American Temperance Union for the reformer.<sup>49</sup>

Inasmuch as the appropriations for the library originated with the post council of administration, the entire responsibility of the library was under its control also. In addition to the selection of books, newspapers, and magazines, the council arranged for the employment of a librarian and a part-time assistant and for the provision of a heated and well-lighted building or tent as a reading room. From time to time rules and regulations concerning the library were issued by the post council. Officers and enlisted men either had separate reading rooms or were given different hours during the day when materials could be used. At Fort Gibson, for example, no papers could be taken from the reading room until twenty-four hours after their arrival, and a two-day limit was placed on all other items for circulation. A fine of five cents per day was set for violators, whose library privileges might have been withdrawn if the fines were not paid.<sup>50</sup> At other posts similar rules were made, occasionally with a more liberal circulation policy

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<sup>49</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, 1841-42, passim, in Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 1 January 1852, Ibid.

when the collection was large enough. At Forts Mackinac and Ridgely the officers used the library during the morning hours, while the afternoon was reserved for the enlisted men. On days when the mail arrived a more strict schedule was observed to allow everyone an equal opportunity of using the latest periodicals.<sup>51</sup>

If the entire regiment were stationed at a single post, there was no problem of duplication or division of library holdings, but usually the command was scattered among five or six posts and a question of ownership and distribution could easily occur. Captain Robert H. Chilton, First Regiment of Dragoons, wrote to Colonel Edwin V. Sumner in the spring of 1849 and objected to the Dragoon's library being located at Fort Leavenworth, the regimental headquarters. Chilton requested that the library holdings be divided proportionately throughout the command, inasmuch as the various companies had mutually donated over \$1,000 to establish and stock the library. "As our means of enjoyment here are few in comparison with those to be found at so accessible a post as Fort Leavenworth," Chilton wrote from Fort Kearny, "I hope you will adopt the earliest measures to obtain a final

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Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, 1 September 1845; Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, 28 September 1854, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

settlement of the question."<sup>52</sup> The question of subdivision was submitted through Colonel Sumner to General David E. Twiggs, commander of the Western Division, and finally to the General in Chief, Winfield Scott. Within a very short time, Scott made his decision and replied that "the equity in the case requires that the library, in question, shall be divided and there is nothing in the General Regulations to overrule or restrain me from giving this decision."<sup>53</sup> Thus, possibly with the precedent of the established means by which the post funds were divided when regimental units were separated or transferred, a knotty cultural problem was solved. This same principle subsequently was followed at Fort Ridgely when units there were separated from regimental headquarters.<sup>54</sup>

One of the most unusual men in the army prior to the Civil War was Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock, who, despite his eccentricities, stood head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries in intellectual abilities. During his active service throughout the West, he collected a voluminous

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<sup>52</sup>  
Captain H. H. Chilton to Colonel E. V. Sumner, 29 May 1849, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>53</sup>  
Captain I. McDowell to General D.E. Twiggs, 10 July 1849, Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>  
War Department, General Regulations...1841, 31; Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, 8 July 1856, Records of Army Commands.

personal library, which he carefully transported from post to post. At one post Hitchcock noted in his diary that while his fellow officers were playing cards, drinking and smoking, he was "disposed to literature and sometimes indicate that I read or think, and it is a field mostly unexplored by others."<sup>55</sup> While stationed at Fort Jesup in 1845, he jubilantly recorded that he received a box of books worth over \$200, including a number of works on alchemy and metaphysics. While some officers celebrated New Year's Day at horse racing and other amusements, Hitchcock entertained himself by playing the flute and examining his book collection which numbered over 750, not including pamphlets, tracts, magazines, and sheet music.<sup>56</sup>

Now and then groups of ambitious and talented soldiers undertook the formation of post or regimental theatrical companies. Among their comrades and officers they always could find willing and enthusiastic audiences, who were equally anxious to enliven a cold winter evening. In most cases a makeshift stage was set up in the main dining room, but Washington Irving found the soldiers at Fort Gibson in 1832 using an Indian Council House for a theatre.<sup>57</sup> On an

<sup>55</sup>

Croffut, (ed.), Fifty Years in Camp and Field, 72.

<sup>56</sup>

Ibid., 189.

<sup>57</sup>

McDermott, (ed.), The Western Journals of Washington Irving, 151.

equally elaborate scale, the soldiers of the First Infantry Regiment at Fort Crawford fitted up a large barrack room with a stage, painted scenery, and a sloping seat arrangement whereon officers and their families, soldiers, and finally Indians, Negroes, and servants sat respectively. Lighting was provided by placing candles on bayonets at strategic points on the stage and about the room. It was at this makeshift theatre that Charles Fenno Hoffman, editor of the New York American, witnessed the performances of "who<sup>58</sup> Wants a Guinea" and "Don Quixote" in the winter of 1834.

Inspector Generals frequently made laudatory remarks about military theatrical groups. When Colonel George Croghan visited Fort Snelling in 1836, he saw the post thespians present "Monsier Touson" and "The Village Lawyer."<sup>59</sup> Twenty years later, Colonel Joseph K.F. Mansfield noted that at Fort McIntosh on the Texas border "There was quite an interest taken in a theatrical company, made up of the men, whose performance was very creditable to them."<sup>60</sup>

In the winter of 1850-1851 a thespian society was formed by the members of the First Dragoons stationed at Fort Leavenworth. For both pleasure and profit the more

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<sup>58</sup>

Hoffman, A Winter in the West, II, 2f.

<sup>59</sup>

Neill, "Occurrences in and around Fort Snelling," 130.

<sup>60</sup>

Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield, Report of Inspection, Department of Texas, 19-23 May 1856, Adjutant General's Office, Misc. File No. 282.

talented soldiers met once a week during the months of February and March to present a series of operettas and plays for their comrades, officers, and families. One such performance, in the main dining room, netted the company enough money to arrange a dress ball later during the year.<sup>61</sup>

George Featherstonhaugh, the peripatetic British geologist, has left a whimsical description of a typical performance by military actors whom he saw while visiting Fort Crawford in 1835:

I paid a visit to the commanding officer, from whose quarters we adjourned to a small theatre, which had been fitted up to amuse the men and keep them from dissipation, where some of the histrionically disposed soldiers were that evening to represent the comedy of 'The Poor Gentleman.' Miss Emily was impersonated in the most astounding manner; such a monster in petticoats, and stick in feeling, probably was never exhibited before. The only three decent performers were an Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotsman; the rest seemed to have neither sense nor feeling. It was a crowded house, and, from the applause that were occasionally given, and the criticisms that I hear, I perceived at once the importance of turning the attention of the common soldier to intellectual exhibitions of this kind, which, besides affording much gratification, cannot fail to divert many of them from sinking into low debauchery.<sup>62</sup>

In at least one instance a soldier so enjoyed theatrical life that, upon expiration of his enlistment as a regimental fifer, he entered that somewhat uncertain profession on a full time basis. While stationed at Fort

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<sup>61</sup>

Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 28; see also Pelzer, Marches of the Dragoons in the Mississippi Valley, 175.

<sup>62</sup>

Featherstonhaugh, A Canoe Voyage, I, 214.

Snelling, 1838-1842, young Harry Watkins borrowed dresses from the commanding officer's daughter in order to play the principal female parts. The impromptu company found their material in books of plays at the post library, and presented their offerings every two weeks for the entertainment of the troops.<sup>63</sup> After his discharge in 1842, Watkins spent the remainder of his life in front of the footlights, playing at the best and the worst theatres from New Orleans to St. Louis. On one occasion he participated in what might be considered one of the first traveling U.S.O. shows in American history. Just after the outbreak of the Mexican War, Watkins was playing with a traveling theatrical group in Galveston, Texas. The company manager made arrangements for his group of actors to accompany some regiments to Corpus Christi. At the latter preliminary staging area, a number of theatrical performances were given for the entertainment of those soldiers who would pay an admission fee. Watkins found a number of his old comrades of the First Infantry Regiment at Corpus Christi and was able to join them for a drink whenever rain canceled performances.<sup>64</sup> When the army departed for the Rio Grande, the actor asked General Taylor for permission to go along and continue his entertainment role. When Taylor failed to

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Maud and Otis Skinner, One Man in His Times -- The Adventures of H. Watkins, Strolling Player (Philadelphia, 1938), 250.

64

Ibid., 14f.

grant the request, Watkins accepted a position as a sutler's clerk in the First Infantry Regiment. However, he was forced to return to Corpus Christi after the sutler's wagon broke down less than halfway to the Rio Grande.<sup>65</sup>

Invariably, the development of the West caught up with the army posts, and many of the latter were instrumental in the development of adjacent civil communities. While some such settlements were struggling for survival, local theatres frequently appeared to afford an off-post source of entertainment for military personnel. Van Buren, Arkansas, near Fort Smith, boasted a thriving opera house which was attended by officers and men from the fort.<sup>66</sup> Camps located on navigable rivers were occasionally visited by a show boat, which may have chanced off the main streams of business along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. In 1833, Major Bennett Riley reported that he confiscated a barrel of whiskey from the showboat Aspinabayou, which he had stopped at Fort Leavenworth on an early spring run. Riley made no comment on the theatrical performance, but indicated that he was planning to give his troops an extra ration of whiskey.<sup>67</sup> Eugene Bandel reported some years later, in a letter to his parents, that the ice had begun to disappear from the Missouri

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 19f.

<sup>66</sup> The Arkansas Intelligencer, February 22, 1839.

<sup>67</sup> Major B. Riley to General H. Atkinson, 4 April 1833, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.



River, signaling the reopening of navigation. He continued that one day he had seen and heard a fancy boat which had a musical device like an organ. A player sat behind the steam powered monster and played a variety of melodies and national songs. Bandel's experience coincides with the calculations of one authority who dates the first showboats on the Missouri River as early as the 1830's. The first showboats and circus barges with calliopes arrived on the scene in the mid-1850's when Bandel was working with a surveying group along the Missouri.

At least once during the winter months a formal ball was held at each major military post. Both enlisted men and officers participated in such occasions and were accompanied by their wives, daughters, laundresses, or neighboring white and Indian women as partners. Such formal functions usually appealed to the best qualities in the men, and one chronicler noted that "even the roughest seemed to rise a little higher and to think better of themselves."

In 1838 the opening of the new post hospital at Fort Leavenworth was celebrated with a supper party and a grand ball. Members of the First Dragoon Regiment traveled for some distance to attend if possible. Major Richard Mason was not

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<sup>68</sup> Bandel, Frontier Life in the Army, 115; see also Philip Graham, Showboats (Austin, 1951), 30.

<sup>69</sup> Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 97.

able to attend, but was comforted by his commanding officer, Stephen W. Kearny, who gallantly undertook to see that Mrs. Mason should attend and enjoy herself.<sup>70</sup> Less formal affairs, of course, were held more frequently. At Camp Jackson near Fort Gibson everyone -- dragoon and infantryman, officer and enlisted man, Indian and white -- joined in lively dances. Music was provided by a rasping fiddle or two, a plunking banjo, frequent guttral undertones from the Indians as bass notes, and an occasional shrill blast from a bugle.<sup>71</sup> During the 1830's, the officers' favorite function at Fort Crawford was a gumbo ball, which was similar to a Mardi Gras party, at which everyone appeared in a ridiculous costume.<sup>72</sup>

While an occasional "democratic" ball was held for officers, soldiers, laborers, and laundresses in the Council House at Fort Atkinson, more often a group of officers and their ladies would travel by boat or carriage to a favorite meeting place a few miles below the fort. There the participants danced all evening, ate a late supper, and returned to the post in the brisk night air.<sup>73</sup> Such entertainment

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<sup>70</sup>  
Lieutenant Colonel S. W. Kearny to Major R.B. Mason, 20 February 1838, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>71</sup>  
Pelzer, Marches of the Dragoons, 27; see also Hildreth, Dragoon Campaigns, 88.

<sup>72</sup>  
Hoffman, A Winter in the West, II, 7.

<sup>73</sup>  
Wesley, "Life at a Frontier Post," 208.

was especially enjoyed during the winter months because the troops usually took to the field for chores of patrolling and road building during the summer months. One sergeant was willing to invest eight dollars for a costume and ticket to a masked ball at Leavenworth City in the winter of 1854,<sup>74</sup> despite the fact that he had not learned to dance.

In one or two instances military personnel attended Indian social affairs. Lieutenant Richard S. Ewell attended a portion of a twenty-two hour dance marathon, which was sponsored by a number of Cherokee families in the vicinity of Fort Gibson in 1842. In a "post-mortem session," Ewell explained to Lieutenant Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock that Indian and white alike danced a lively version of the Virginia reel. During the non-stop dance three successive fiddlers were used, and only one short intermission was taken for a quick breakfast.<sup>75</sup> In the same neighborhood, at Beattie's Prairie, an annual "Green Corn Dance" was held and was attended by a number of soldiers from Fort Gibson whenever military duties could be left behind or avoided.<sup>76</sup>

In the Southwest where the Spanish influence was felt, soldiers from New Mexican and Texas forts attended fandangoes in neighboring towns and villages. While stationed

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<sup>74</sup> Bandel, Frontier Life in the Army, 113.

<sup>75</sup> Foreman, (ed.), A Traveller in Indian Territory, 79.

<sup>76</sup> The Cherokee Advocate, August 27, 1846.

at a camp near Las Vegas, Sergeant James Bennett attended a fandango where he found "ladies of all shades from snowy white to jet black; all dressed in gaudy attire...the music struck up; the floor filled; a quick lively air was played... This dance was a species of Waltz."<sup>77</sup> Later at Albuquerque and Santa Fe, Bennett found that four fandangoes were held in town every evening. Frequent scuffles occurred between the natives and American soldiers, both of whom were expert knif<sup>78</sup>ers.

One of the most lively posts for social affairs was Jefferson Barracks, the hub of the frontier defense system, about nine miles south of St. Louis on the Mississippi River. When the ladies of the post were not engaged in giving parties, the younger officers accepted invitations for dances and socials given by the prominent people in St. Louis. To a young lieutenant with a limited income and a special social position to maintain, such parties and hospitality meant a great deal.<sup>79</sup> While Green Bay, Wisconsin, was not so busy a social center, it did attract most of the younger officers from Fort Howard, who were in search of a respite from camp life. At an Indian agent's home in 1830, a series of parties and dances was held, whereupon everyone for miles around,

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<sup>78</sup>

Ibid., 38f.

<sup>79</sup>

Lieutenant G. H. Gordon to Mrs. E. C. Gordon, 17 October 1846, MS. in George H. Gordon Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

young and old, brought out their finery for "a real western hop."<sup>80</sup> During the winter of 1854 a skating party was planned at Fort Ridgely. The post council of administration very generously appropriated \$3.30 for fifteen gallons of whiskey.<sup>81</sup>

At other frontier posts, informal and impromptu gatherings took place in officers' quarters and soldiers' barracks. Comrades gathered together for a pipe, a toddy, and some cards, all the while exchanging stories about earlier adventures. Here and there a voice would be raised in song and through a rough beard weather beaten lips would sing tenderly about home and of the girls left behind: "Oh blithe is the life that the soldier leads, when a careless freedom marks his deed -- and gay his path o'er the wild woods sod, where a whiteman's foot hath never trod." Thus a certain spark of romanticism crept into the barracks conversation, only to end abruptly when it was realized that reveille<sup>82</sup> would sound before sunup.

Special occasions, such as Christmas, July Fourth, and payday, called for gay celebrations, indeed. Christmas dinner for men away from home was one of the greatest events of the year. The mess tables groaned with extra rations of

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<sup>80</sup>  
Kinzie, Wau-Bun, 37; see also Cooke, Scenes and Adventures, 21.

<sup>81</sup>  
Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, 2 March 1854, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>82</sup>  
David McMurtrie Gregg Papers, 1856, MS in Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

food, geese, duck, wild turkey, venison, and vegetables which had been prudently stored away from the autumn harvest. Preceding and following a rich dinner, many a toast of whiskey or egg nog was consumed to enliven the occasion. To many, however, the lack of a chaplain and church services robbed the day of some of its joys. Festivities ended on the morning of the twenty-sixth, which usually would be just another day at an army post. At most forts the new year was ushered in with equal warmth and merriment, especially when a foaming barrel of eggnog was in the center of the dining table. <sup>83</sup>

Independence Day was a truly national holiday even at isolated western military posts. After the firing of a twenty-one gun salute at noon, officers and their guests frequently gathered in the main dining hall for a banquet with champagne and wine for all. Local Indians, attracted by the noise, would appear on the scene and present a series of tribal dances including the eagle dance, the bear dance, and the beggar dance, after which they would receive food and trinkets. <sup>84</sup> At some posts the day was marked by parades, a formal salute at noon, and fireworks and rockets in the evening. To climax the day horse races and fife and drum music were presented, and, at posts fortunate enough to have

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<sup>83</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 100f; Cooke, Scenes and Adventures, 21.

<sup>84</sup>

Murray, Travels in North America, I, 253; see also Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 135f.

a military band, there would be an evening concert.<sup>85</sup>

When in garrison and after duty hours, soldiers were often free to leave the post without written permission in order to visit nearby villages and towns. At Fort Towson, enlisted men could travel to Doaksville to the west or in any other direction not exceeding six miles without written permission. To take longer trips for longer periods than an evening outing, soldiers were required to have special permission from the commanding officer.<sup>86</sup> As long as army camps have existed, soldiers of course have found ways and means of leaving camp for one reason or another, with or without permission. Musician Harry Watkins, because of his diminutive size, was pressed into service by his bulkier comrades to scale the walls at Fort Snelling to fetch a five gallon container of cheap whiskey from a French Canadian who operated a still about five miles below the fort, just beyond the reaches of military authorities.<sup>87</sup> At Albuquerque, New Mexico, Sergeant James Bennett observed that "Orders were very strict; not allowed to leave camp, day or night, without permission.... The soldiers will be out of camps inspite of orders or officers."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Lieutenant Colonel J. Vose to Major B.L.E. Bonneville, 10 March 1838, Records of Army Commands, Fort Towson, Letters Sent.

<sup>87</sup> Skinner, One Man in His Times, 206.

<sup>88</sup> Brooks and Reeve, (eds.), Forts and Forays, 38.

Applications for furloughs and leaves of absence constituted a considerable portion of the paper work handled daily by post and regimental adjutants. After extended service on the frontier, soldiers looked forward to traveling home to visit families and friends. The usual practice for officers was to apply for a sixty day furlough and to ask for permission to request an extension for a longer period of time. For example, Lieutenant Colonel David Baker applied to General Henry Atkinson for a sixty day leave, which was granted. Later a ten month extension was added so that Baker could take care of personal family affairs which he had neglected during his four years' continuous service on the frontier. Before his second leave had expired, Baker requested and received additional time until river transportation to Jefferson Barracks should open the following spring.

One of the recognized hardships of military service on the frontier was that leaves were few and far between, especially when troops were transferred from one location to another, thus disturbing training programs and routine procedures. Many officers received favorable consideration whenever they requested a furlough for the purpose of moving

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89

Lieutenant Colonel D. Baker to General H. Atkinson, 4 February 1831; 1 November 1831 and endorsements, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.



their families to the North or East because of severe climate  
 in the South and West.<sup>90</sup> Other officers took short furloughs  
 to travel to other posts or towns to pack up families and  
 belongings and transport them to a new post. If an officer  
 could be spared or temporarily replaced, the army usually  
 granted such requests, realizing that the family man's morale<sup>91</sup>  
 was raised if he had a sense of security about his family.  
 Single officers, on the other hand, looked forward to fur-  
 loughs in order to travel to some center of civilization for<sup>92</sup>  
 a brief respite from the confinements of frontier isolation.

The position of post or regimental adjutant normally  
 required a mild disposition and a hearty sense of humor,  
 especially when furlough applications were to be handled  
 with complete detachment and objectivity. One can easily  
 vision the broad grin on the lips of the Adjutant of the  
 Department of the West Headquarters at New Orleans in 1852,  
 when he received and acknowledged a request for a two months'  
 leave of absence from Lieutenant Melancthon Smith at Fort  
 Chadbourne, Texas. The young Lieutenant wanted to go to  
 Mobile, Alabama, beginning February 15, 1853, in "order to

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<sup>90</sup>

Lieutenant J. Elliott to Colonel S. Cooper, 25  
 September 1852, Records of Army Commands, Department of the  
 West, Letters Received.

<sup>91</sup>

Lieutenant E. K. Kane to General M. Arbuckle, 22  
 July 1845, Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 143.

fulfill a matrimonial engagement."<sup>93</sup> Lieutenant Winfield Scott Hancock, Adjutant of the Sixth Infantry Regiment at Fort Crawford in 1848, doubtless gritted his teeth when he granted a twenty-one day leave to Lieutenant David Miller. The latter stated that he had not seen his parents for six months and that he wanted to celebrate his twenty-first birthday with them at Milwaukee, Wisconsin in December.<sup>94</sup> One of the most unusual requests for a furlough and an extension, accompanied by a note from the post surgeon, came from Lieutenant Julius Garesche at Port Isabel, Texas. Both petitioners felt that Garesche's teeth were in need of care by a competent dentist either at New Orleans or Washington, D.C. Since such a health service was not provided by the army,<sup>95</sup> the furlough was granted.

Some officers never left the frontier, but used leaves of absence to visit friends at neighboring military posts. Such leaves usually, were easily obtained and inexpensively financed. Captain U. S. Grant, for example, traveled around a circuit near Fort Jesup, Louisiana, to

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93

Lieutenant M. Smith to Assistant Adjutant General at New Orleans, 20 December 1852, Records of Army Commands, Department of West, L.R.

94

Lieutenant D. Miller to Lieutenant W.S. Hancock, 17 November 1848, Ibid.

95

Assistant Surgeon E. Abadie to A.A. G. Hq. 4th Mil. Dist., St. Louis, Mo. 8 November 1848, Ibid.

spend some time with a number of former Academy classmates.<sup>96</sup>

The practice of short, local leaves probably was most common among medical officers who frequently exchanged places with their colleagues at nearby posts. Dr. Rodney Glisan found that a respite from his duties at Fort Arbuckle, even though he practiced medicine at another post for a brief time, was as valuable psychologically as a trip to some large town.<sup>97</sup>

In the summer of 1831, Lieutenant Philip St. George Cooke became so restless from inactivity at Fort Leavenworth that he used a leave of absence to accompany an officer from the Department of Indian Affairs on an official tour of inspection of nearby Otoe and Omaha villages.<sup>98</sup>

Frontier military men often looked forward to visits from other military personnel and especially from civilians. The frontier people were genuinely hospitable to all travelers because they so appreciated receiving some direct contact with the outside world. The contacts were the more valuable because oral, detailed reports were so much more vivid than the dead pages of newspapers which were received at almost every post. Official delegations of soldiers and civilians for Indian treaty proceedings and the Inspector General were equally welcome, for their presence added a special excite-

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<sup>96</sup>

Grant, Personal Memoirs, I, 35.

<sup>97</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 144.

<sup>98</sup>

Foreman, Fort Gibson, 15; see also Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 76.

ment to the general monotony of daily routine.<sup>99</sup>

Women writers were a strange but not unwelcome sight at some frontier posts. Mrs. Elizabeth F.L. Ellet, the wife of a struggling college professor, added to the family income by writing of her travels throughout the West. She often visited military stations including Fort Crawford and Fort Snelling. While at the latter post in the summer of 1852, Mrs. Ellet observed the method by which the Indians received their annual annuity and supplies. The bearing and tact of the military men seemed to impress Mrs. Ellet more than anything else.<sup>100</sup> Another lady traveler, Mrs.

Eliza R. Steele, spent July 4, 1841 at Fort Mackinac, Michigan. She recorded having enjoyed the company and hospitality of the commanding officer and his wife, and of accepting a gift of "kini kanic" Indian tobacco for her husband.<sup>101</sup>

At Fort Snelling in 1845, Nathaniel F. Moore, a New York merchant on an excursion to the Falls of the St. Anthony on the Mississippi River, stopped to exchange several hours of conversation on current events in the East for the company of the commanding officer, the post surgeon, the

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<sup>99</sup> Foreman, Fort Gibson, 15; see also Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 76.

<sup>100</sup> Elizabeth F.L. Ellet, Summer Rambles in the West (New York, 1853), 63; 103.

<sup>101</sup> Eliza R. Steele, A Summer Journey in the West (New York, 1841), 109.

chaplain, and the sutler. The group also enjoyed a number of excellent dinners, complemented by good wine. While traveling to Fort Crawford by river steamer, Moore was pleased to have the company of a part of the First Infantry Band, which played farewell music as the boat left Fort Snelling. While this particular unit was being transferred to Fort Crawford, other groups of the band frequently accompanied excursion trips to the upper falls.<sup>102</sup>

Mrs. John Kinzie, previously mentioned, has left a nostalgic description of a typical reception accorded to newcomers to the frontier:

Major and Mrs. Twiggs, and a few of the younger officers...gave us a cordial welcome -- how cordial those alone can know who have come, like us, to a remote isolated home in the wilderness. The Major insisted on our taking possession at once of vacant quarters in the fort, instead of at the 'Agency,' as had been proposed.... Mrs. Wiggs had been without a companion of her own sex for more than three months, and certainly would not hear of separation now.<sup>103</sup>

When George W. Featherstonhaugh investigated geological formations near the source of the Mississippi River in 1835 and 1836, he found all visits to military posts very rewarding in terms of hospitable company and comfortable accommodations, with one notable exception. Featherstonhaugh

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102

Stanley Pargellis and Ruth L. Butler, (eds.),  
Diary of a Trip from New York to the Falls of the St.  
Anthony (Chicago, 1946), 28; 36.

103

Kinzie, Wau-Bun, 90.

stopped at Fort Snelling, which was for most travelers one of a series of government operated rent-free inns where he passed a pleasant evening dining and chatting with Major and Mrs. John Bliss. Later in the evening, he was conducted to his sleeping quarters which he observed to be remarkably inferior to those he had used at other posts. The geologist passed a miserable night wrapped in buffalo skins on an old table in an unused ill-ventilated storeroom. The following day he discovered that while he could not have slept at the Major's house because Mrs. Bliss was having servant problems, his host had not intended to put him on "ice." Rather, it had been the work of the executive officer, "a long-legged, self-sanctified, unearthly looking mortal, who was always singing psalms, and boring the garrison...with temperance societies, pious exhortations, and puritanical factions...." The officer intimated that Featherstonhaugh looked like a sinner -- hence the necessary "torture on earth."<sup>104</sup>

Other notable visitors to the western military frontier in the mid-nineteenth century included the previously mentioned American artist, George Catlin, who devoted himself to compiling a pictorial study of the North American Indians. Catlin found a ready welcome at such out-of-the-way posts as Forts Crawford, Leavenworth, and Snelling,

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104

Featherstonhaugh, A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Sotar, I, 260ff.

especially whenever he was accompanied by his charming  
 wife.<sup>105</sup> In 1835 and again in 1839, Jean Nicollet made Fort  
 Snelling his base of operations for an astronomical study.  
 Fortified with letters of introduction and official letters  
 from the War Department, Nicollet, with the help of Henry  
 H. Sibley, selected an advantageous location in the vicinity  
 of Fort Snelling.<sup>106</sup> In 1854 similar work was carried on  
 by Sir George Gore and Lord Fitz William, who used Fort  
 Laramie as headquarters for astronomical and geological work  
 in the vicinity of the Black Hills.<sup>107</sup> The Prussian botanist,  
 Count Beyrich, had the misfortune to die of cholera at Fort  
 Gibson in 1834, but, fortunately for science, all his papers  
 and belongings were forwarded to the Prussian Consul at  
 Baltimore by General Mathew Arbuckle.<sup>108</sup>

One of the few British travelers to visit areas  
 west of the Mississippi River, other than explorers and  
 scientists, was the indefatigable Captain Frederick Marryat,  
 who stopped at Forts Snelling, Crawford, and Winnebago  
 during his American tour of 1837-38. He was cordially

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105

Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 144f; see also  
 Neill, "Occurrences in and around Fort Snelling," 126f.

106

Henry H. Sibley, "Memoir of Jean Nicollet,"  
Collections of the Minnesota State Historical Society, I  
 (1902), 150f.

107

Coutant, History of Wyoming, I, 327.

108

General M. Arbuckle to Colonel R. Jones, 11 May  
 1835, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

received everywhere and was wined and dined as a member of the royal family of eminent British authors, who fairly in-<sup>109</sup>festes the United States during the 1830's and 1840's.

Marryat found officers and their families very courteous and likeable, though he did not hold so high an opinion of the rank and file. He was amazed at the number of foreigners, the lack of discipline, and the number of desertions, although he did applaud the relatively severe punishments that<sup>110</sup> were meted out to captured deserters.

A certain amount of independent scientific research was attempted by a number of officers during their service at western posts. Philip St. George Cooke used his furlough time on the plains to study the habits and customs of Indians in the vicinity of Fort Leavenworth in the 1830's. He hoped to investigate the subject beyond the meagre and quite often incorrect notions which had been set down by other contem-<sup>111</sup>porary writers. At Fort Ripley, Chaplain Solon W. Manny kept an accurate account of general weather developments in his diary for a number of years. He concerned himself mainly with temperature extremes, river stages, and general climatic

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109

Marryat, A Diary in America, II, 53.

110

Ibid., II, 305.

111

Cooke, Scenes and Adventures in the Army, 115f.



conditions during harvest and planting times.<sup>112</sup> For a lack of time more than any other reason, Major Ethan Allen Hitchcock was unable to carry out a project for which he expressed considerable interest. In 1841 Dr. William B. Powell, director of the National Institute for the Promotion of Sciences, asked Hitchcock to undertake the collection of minerals, rock specimens, skins, birds, and aboriginal crania in the Southwestern area adjacent to Fort Gibson.<sup>113</sup> Probably the most vigorous of independent research workers during this period was Dr. William Beaumont, who conducted a series of experiments over a period of years to make him and his patient St. Martin, well known. His work on the physiology of the digestive tract was done through a window-like opening in the wall of Alexis St. Martin's stomach. Beaumont's experiments and observations enabled him to discover the part which the stomach played in the entire digestive system, and how that system could be upset by external and internal stimuli.<sup>114</sup>

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112

George C. Tanner, "History of Fort Ripley, 1849 to 1859," Collections of the Minnesota State Historical Society, X (1905), 187f.

113

Dr. W. P. Powell to Ethan A. Hitchcock, (n.d.-1841), MS. in Ethan Allen Hitchcock Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

114

Myer, Life and Letters of Dr. William Beaumont, 82ff.

Life was not always gloomy and morose at the frontier post, for a part of a soldier's daily life was taken up with leisure time activities. Most soldiers preferred active outdoor sports or evening socials, but some few possessed an intellectual curiosity for reading and learning. Many soldiers took an active interest in religious organizations and further formal schooling, which were an integral part of garrison life.

## CHAPTER VII

### RELIGION AND EDUCATION

To the general belief that there were no atheists in fox-holes could be added the corollary that most soldiers recognize a Power or Being greater than the first sergeant or the commanding officer. Religion in its broadest sense has always been a significant part of American life, and at frontier military stations in the mid-nineteenth century it was no less important. While isolated in most instances from familiar and accepted institutions of civilization, the frontier guardsman sought to maintain as many of life's essentials as possible. In addition to food, clothing, and shelter, the army provided a framework of government (through the articles of war and the general regulations), an occupation, and medical care. However, it was not until 1838 that provisions for religious and moral instruction became an official part of garrison life. While the number of posts authorized for a chaplain's service was then limited to twenty, an important precedent was established for bringing the comforts and benefits of religious exercises to men

at isolated frontier posts.<sup>1</sup>

Earlier in 1791 and 1812, Congress had been given the power to appoint chaplains for the army, navy, and both houses of Congress.<sup>2</sup> In the latter act, army chaplains were provided for troops during the war with England, but when hostilities were ended, such public servants were discharged and their units disbanded.<sup>3</sup> In other cases, some states provided chaplains for their militia units when they were pressed into federal service during times of emergency. The General Regulations for 1825 provided for the specific appointment of a chaplain for each of the two major military departments, the East and the West. The chaplain's duties were not outlined, but his position was defined as "an officer of the staff who should be subordinate to any line officer not under the rank of major."<sup>4</sup> However, during the period 1825 to 1837, only two chaplains received War Department appointments -- one for the period 1825-27, and the other for 1828 1837.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> War Department General Order No. 29, 18 August 1838, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received; see also Office of the Chief of Chaplains, American Army Chaplaincy (Washington, 1946), 15f.

<sup>2</sup> Lorenzo D. Johnson, Chaplains of the General Government (New York, 1856), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>4</sup> Office of the Chief of Chaplains, American Army Chaplaincy, 13f.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, Chaplains of the General Government, 65.

Despite disinterest or antipathy in Congress, opportunities for church services and religious instruction were provided at a number of western military establishments. At Fort Snelling in 1821, Colonel Josiah Snelling's wife and daughter initiated a Sunday school in the basement of the Colonel's quarters. Every Sunday morning the children of the garrison and neighboring settlements gathered for a worship service and bible stories. Likewise, at Fort Winnebago in the 1830's, Mrs. John Kinzie, wife of the Winnebago Indian Agent, found that the garrison and nearby settlements had no church. Mrs. Kinzie felt that "it would be very pleasant, and perhaps profitable, for all the inmates of the garrison to assemble...<sup>6</sup> [whereby]...one of our number might be found who would read a portion of the church service, and a sermon from one of our different selections." Her hopes faded for a moment when someone jocularly suggested calling upon a particular officer who was noted for his alternate lapses of alcoholism and religious fanaticism. The officer, when intoxicated, was alleged to have taken his bible to bed where he wailed and moaned until sober. Still sincere, Mrs. Kinzie and her more pious friends often wrote to people in the East to ask that a missionary be sent to their isolated station.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> George C. Tanner, "Early Episcopal Churches and Missions in Minnesota," Collections of the Minnesota State Historical Society, X (1905), 203.

<sup>7</sup> Kinzie, Wau-Bun, 123f.

In the spring of 1833, Mrs. Kinzie's dreams were realized, at least temporarily. The Reverend and Mrs. Kent of Galena, Illinois, visited Fort Winnebago and presented a Protestant church service there for the first time. The large parlor in the post hospital was used for the occasion, which apparently was very moving. "For nearly three years," Mrs. Kinzie wrote, "we had lived without the blessing of a public service of praise and thanksgiving. We regarded this commencement as an omen of better times...." After the Kents' departure, the ladies' sewing circle increased its endeavors to raise a fund for a permanent missionary.<sup>8</sup>

Although some posts did not have an official chaplain or comparable lay reader, religious needs were fulfilled by ministers such as Mr. Kent, who were sent into the wilderness to preach among the "heathen" Indians. When Reverend and Mrs. William M. Ferry arrived at Mackinac Island in 1823, they were cordially received and welcomed by the Fort Mackinac garrison. Whenever Ferry conducted a prayer meeting or church service in town, many officers and their families would attend.<sup>9</sup> In 1825 Mrs. Ferry wrote to her sister in Ashfield, Massachusetts, that the little band of Christians at Mackinac had increased to seven. Among the group was Mrs. William

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<sup>8</sup>

Ibid., 567f.

<sup>9</sup>

Charles A. Anderson, (ed.), "Frontier Mackinac Island, 1823-1834, Letters of William Montague and Amanda White Ferry," Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society, XXV (December, 1947), 199.

Hoffman, wife of the commanding officer, who "became hopefully changed through the preaching of Mr. Laird at Sault Ste. Marie...[Fort Brady] Was recently stationed at this post, having no previous opportunity to unite with the church. She appears to be a valuable woman."<sup>10</sup> One might judge from the last remark that Mrs. Ferry visualized using the influence of the commanding officer's wife to increase the size of the missionary group to seventeen.

When Fort Mackinac became headquarters for the Fifth Infantry Regiment in 1829, Mrs. Ferry happily noted that a considerable interest was given to the mission church. The new commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Enos Cutler, [was reputed to have been somewhat a man of the world, but one who would attend church if the weather was pleasant. Cutler's wife, unfortunately, was an invalid and a staunch Episcopalian and consequently never joined her husband at church. However, Dr. Richard S. Satterlee, the post surgeon, and a number of other officers and their wives attended church regularly, while the single officers, two of whom were allegedly dissipated, attended only occasionally. Most of the enlisted men attended Sunday services and evening prayer meetings, at which the main attraction appeared to be Mrs. Ferry's comely appearance and beautiful singing.<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup>

Ibid., 126.

<sup>11</sup>

Ibid., XXVI, 123.

Ferry's carried on their missionary work at Mackinac until 1834, at which time Mr. Ferry retired from the ministry because of ill health.<sup>12</sup> A monument to his work remained at the island, however. Eight officers contributed a total of \$110 toward the building of a mission church, which was completed shortly before Ferry retired.<sup>13</sup>

During his pastoral work at Mackinac, Ferry had the assistance of Elisha Loomis, a lay worker for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Loomis reported to Jeremiah Evarts, the Board's secretary, that besides a Sunday School class in the village, he held regular prayer meetings at Fort Mackinac for those soldiers who wished to attend. During 1830, he reported having twenty-five regular attendants. Such a gathering might appear small, but it actually represented about twenty per cent of the total strength at Fort Mackinac at the time.<sup>14</sup>

The situation at Fort Howard, near Green Bay, Wisconsin, was much the same as at Fort Mackinac. In 1831, Reverend Cutting Marsh reported to his missionary board that

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<sup>12</sup>

Ibid., 191.

<sup>13</sup>

W. M. Ferry to D. Greene, November 5, 1830, MS. in Papers of The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

<sup>14</sup>

E. Loomis to J. Evarts, January 22, 1831, Ibid; see also American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 591.



most troops at Fort Howard were being transferred to Fort Winnebago, and new troops were then arriving from Fort Dearborn. Marsh envisioned a considerable challenge in dealing with new troops, especially in an atmosphere of competition with nearby Episcopal and Roman Catholic missionaries. By coincidence, as at Fort Mackinac, the post surgeon, Dr. Lyman Foote, was the most loyal follower and supporter of the mission station, both by example and by exhortation. However, Marsh reported that Dr. Foote was being transferred to Jefferson Barracks, but that he was about to be replaced by a Dr. Finley as post surgeon. Finley was "not a professor of religion...although he...still appears to be a man of correct religious principles," but Marsh hoped that the latter would know "something of religion by experience."<sup>15</sup>

At Sault Ste. Marie near Fort Brady, Reverend Jeremiah Porter operated a Presbyterian mission station and frequently offered his services to members of the garrison. Porter arrived at Fort Brady in November, 1831, after a short assistantship to Reverend Ferry at Mackinac Island. Among the first services that Porter attended was the baptism of two soldiers and an Indian woman. On Sunday, November 27, 1831, Porter and a Reverend Boutwell broke the ice in the St. Mary's River and performed the ceremony. In

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<sup>15</sup>

C. Marsh to D. Greene, July 20, 1831, Ibid.

his journal, Porter expressed some regret that on such a solemn occasion the people were not immersed completely.<sup>16</sup>

During Porter's ministry at Fort Brady many soldiers were converted and baptized and "were hopeful subjects of grace," among whom was the commanding officer -- a signal victory for any clergyman. Also among his converts were several Roman Catholics who had "renounced papacy cordially and entirely as a system of priest-craft and ridiculous mummery."<sup>17</sup>

Porter was assisted by a Reverend Bingham of the Baptist church in establishing a temperance society at the post.

The group met at least one evening a week with the ministers for scripture reading and prayer and met in smaller groups at other times for meditation. Porter inaugurated a savings fund into which soldiers deposited the money they formerly would have spent on beer and whiskey.<sup>18</sup> Porter felt that his greatest victory lay in the partial conversion of Lieutenant William Clary's wife, who had been a Catholic and whose father was a Jew and her mother a Quaker.<sup>19</sup>

In the winter of 1835, Reverend Abel Barber arrived at Fort Winnebago to assume the duties of permanent missionary

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<sup>16</sup> Jeremiah Porter, Journal of Incidents 1831-1833, November 27, 1831, microfilm copy of MS. in Phillips Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., April 14, 1832.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., January 28, 1832.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., February 13, 1832.

and occasional post chaplain. He was paid forty dollars a month from the post fund for performing religious services. In a letter to Reverend David Greene at Boston, Barber reported that he had been received very kindly by Lieutenant Colonel Enos Cutler and other officers of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, and that every facility had been placed at his disposal to aid in carrying out his mission. Barber indicated that Dr. Charles McDougall and his wife were the only Presbyterians at the post, but that the doctor had influenced others to express an interest in a course of religious instruction. In addition to Sunday services, Barber started a series of weekly prayer meetings, a bible study class, and a temperance society. Unhappily, an impasse occurred when a number of officers objected to worshipping with the enlisted men. Barber would not hear of separate services and decided to leave. Lieutenant Colonel Cutler sympathized with the clergyman's position and urged him to stay. But, seeing possible hypocrisy on Barber's part if he acquiesced to the minority's anti-Christian feelings, Cutler finally suggested that Barber return to his nearby Indian mission and offer the garrison his services for special occasions.<sup>20</sup>

In 1829, Reverend Alvin Coe, a frontier missionary, visited Fort Snelling where he preached twice on Sunday,

20

A. Barber to D. Greene, March 19, 1835, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

September 26, and held a prayer meeting the next evening in the quarters of the commanding officer. Coe stayed on another week by popular request to preach on the following Sunday, after which he continued on his way toward the St. Croix River.<sup>21</sup> Major Joseph C. Plympton, commanding officer at Fort Snelling in the early 1830's, invited soldiers into his quarters, where he held weekly worship services consisting of his reading sermons and essays from an Eastern evangelical journal. Finally, in May 1835, Reverend Thomas S. Williamson arrived at the fort to establish a permanent church. By the following June twenty persons had entered into a covenant, elders had been elected, and communion had been administered according to the rites of the Presbyterian church.<sup>22</sup> During the following years, when the church was active, other missionaries, including Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Riggs, visited the fort in order to procure supplies for their more distant stations and found an unusually strong Christian atmosphere there.<sup>23</sup>

Early services were held at Fort Leavenworth by Reverend Isaac McCoy, who accompanied a Major Dougherty to investigate Indian affairs at the post in 1830. Reverend

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<sup>21</sup> Neill, "Occurrences in and around Fort Snelling," 120.

<sup>22</sup> "Early Days at Fort Snelling," Collections of the Minnesota State Historical Society, I (1902), 358f.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen R. Riggs, Mary and I, Fort Years with the Sioux, (Chicago, 1880), 17f.

Samuel Allis lived at the post during the summer of 1834, during which time he conducted a number of public services. An unusual event took place at Fort Leavenworth in 1835, when a Catholic priest, Father Charles Van Quackenborne, was invited to preach in the post chapel.<sup>24</sup> Such an experience can be considered unusual in view of the fact that most army officers were Protestants of one denomination or another.<sup>25</sup>

The foregoing examples indicate that the need for religious exercises and spiritual guidance was recognized by many military leaders on the frontier. In most cases voluntary services were happily accepted and in only one or two cases were ministers afforded some sort of official recognition and remuneration. In the meantime, government officials were not unsympathetic to the problems faced by the frontier soldier. Secretary of War Lewis Cass expressed his concern on the subject in his annual report for 1831:

The American soldier is well paid, fed, and clothed; and, in the event of sickness or disability, ample provision is made for his support. But his moral culture is wholly neglected. There is no arrangement in our service for his mental or religious improvement. And there is perhaps no similar service in which such a measure is more necessary. Many of the positions occupied by our troops are upon the verge of civilization, or beyond it. There they are retained for years, and under circumstances which, if not counteracted, almost necessarily lead to great demoralization....

<sup>24</sup>

Henry Shindler, Public Worship, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 1827-1907 (Fort Leavenworth, 10-7), 2f.

<sup>25</sup>

Office of Chief of Chaplains, American Army Chaplaincy, 23.

I am satisfied that the appointment of chaplains, and their employment at such of our garrisons, may seem to call for such a measure, would be productive of great advantages to the service; and to the soldiers individually the measure would be equally beneficial.<sup>26</sup>

Cass again included in his annual report for 1836 a statement of interest in having Congress act upon a proposal to appoint chaplains to the army. Although in a number of cases post councils of administration at permanent military stations had hired clergymen with voluntary contributions, no official plan had materialized. However, interest in the project was mounting, especially among the more thoughtful members of the armed forces on the frontier.<sup>27</sup> From Fort Brady Lieutenant Joseph S. Gallagher wrote to Senator Benjamin Swift of Vermont to urge the passage of a bill authorizing the appointment of army chaplains. In contrast to the army's plight, Gallagher pointed out that the navy had spent over \$10,000 a year for fleet chaplains, and that Congress had appointed chaplains for its own use and for the Military Academy at West Point. Gallagher cited a case of a minister's being employed at Fort Brady, after which the number of guard house inmates there fell off sharply through good guidance. The Lieutenant estimated that willing and competent clergymen could be appointed at an annual salary of \$200 to \$400.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 209.

<sup>27</sup> Office of the Chief of Chaplains, American Army Chaplaincy, 14.

<sup>28</sup> American State Papers, Military Affairs, VI, 119f.

A similar appeal was written to Senator John Davis of Massachusetts by Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Vose at Fort Towson:

I have been in the army for nearly twenty-four years, and I am now convinced, from past experience that nothing will add so much to the respectability and influence of our army as the appointment of chaplains and the regular public worship of God at our military posts on the Sabbath.

It is found that where the Sabbath is properly observed and the public worship held, that there are fewer desertions, less intoxication, and a more healthy command.

Vose continued by observing that with compulsory church attendance for officers and enlisted men and with the careful selection of chaplains on the basis of talent, character, and undoubted piety, the moral character of the army would change remarkably. He concluded his letter with the facetious suggestion that since the government had an "overflowing treasury," an expenditure of fifty or sixty thousand dollars a year for the benefit of the common soldier would hardly be a burden. A government which could balance its fiscal accounts and build a treasury surplus by means of a high tariff and booming land sales might well prepare its soldiers for what Vose called "a better and another world."<sup>29</sup>

Congress finally acted on July 5, 1838, by passing a bill for the appointment of army chaplains. The act was further supplemented by War Department Order 29, which

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<sup>29</sup>

Ibid., 148.

provided that post councils of administration should take steps to employ a chaplain who, in addition to his pastoral duties, would "teach and instruct the children of the private soldier as well as the officer." Furthermore, the chaplain's compensation was set at forty dollars per month with an allowance for four rations per day and the allotment of fuel and quarters for a captain. The number of chaplain posts was limited to twenty, which included Jefferson Barracks, and Forts Gratiot, Brady, Winnebago, Snelling, Leavenworth, Crawford, Gibson, Jesup, and Towson.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of this act, the Reverend Richard J. Cadle, an Episcopal clergyman, became the first chaplain to be appointed by the post council of administration at Fort Crawford, Wisconsin.<sup>31</sup> Later in the year other appointments were made, including Abel Bingham at Fort Brady, Ezekial Gear at Fort Snelling, Charles Reighly at Fort Gratiot, and Henry Gregory at Fort Leavenworth. In 1839 other chaplains were hired, including John J. Ungerrer at Jefferson Barracks, who was succeeded by Charles S. Hodges, Stephen P. Keyes at Fort Winnebago, David E. Griffith at Fort Leavenworth as a replacement for Reverend Gregory, and Henry J. Lamb at Fort Jesup. In 1840 Reverend William Scull received the chaplain's

<sup>30</sup>

War Department Order 29, 18 August 1838, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>31</sup>

Office of Chief of Chaplains, American Army Chaplaincy, 16.



appointment at Fort Gibson.<sup>32</sup>

More explicit information concerning the chaplain's duties was included in the General Regulations for the Army issued by the War Department in 1841. In addition to the several provisions in War Department Order 29, the General Regulations stipulated that after the post council had made its selection of a man for the chaplain's office, the candidate's name was to be submitted to the Secretary of War and the Adjutant General for their official acknowledgement. At those posts which were provided with chaplains church attendance was made compulsory. The regulations also instructed the chaplain to deliver a short, practical sermon at his regular Sunday services. However, if a post were without a chaplain, commanding officers were urged to make use of local churches. The soldiers were not only required to attend church, but they were also forced to parade with their side arms to the regular religious services. Wives and families were encouraged to cooperate and attend church also, but such attendance for them was not compulsory. Finally, chaplains were instructed to visit the sick at the post hospitals or in the barracks. It was necessary, however, for the chaplains to have the permission and approval of the attending surgeon for such visits.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup>

Johnson, Chaplains of the General Government, 66f.

<sup>33</sup>

War Department, General Regulations....1841, 34f.

Subsequent editions of the General Regulations in 1847 and 1857 contained substantially the same regulations and instructions concerning chaplains. In all editions specific attention was called to the Second Article of War wherein it was "earnestly recommended to all officers and soldiers diligently to attend Divine service."<sup>34</sup> In addition to an "earnest recommendation," the Second Article of War also provided that any officer who was found guilty of indecent or irreverent behavior at a church service could be court martialed. Any non-commissioned officer found guilty was to be fined one-sixth of a dollar for the first offense and, for the second, to be fined a similar amount and to be confined to quarters for twenty-four hours.<sup>35</sup>

Although the general spirit of observing high moral standards continued to exist throughout every command, the degree of observation varied from commander to commander. In one instance Colonel Stephen W. Kearny questioned the validity of compulsory church attendance in the light of traditional religious freedom. To Kearny's query the Adjutant General's Office replied that all commanding officers had every right to require troops under their command to attend church on Sunday. "It may be made a part of their

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<sup>34</sup>

War Department, General Regulations, ...1847, 54.

<sup>35</sup>

Alfred Mordecai, (ed.), A Digest of Laws Relating to the Military Establishment of the United States (Washington, 1833), 41.

military duty," wrote Colonel Roger Jones, "and they should be paraded and marched to the place of worship." Jones included in his letter an exhortation from Lewis Cass, the Secretary of War and champion of the movement to provide chaplains for the army, that it would be particularly grievous to him (Cass) to hear that any portion of the troops should object to attending divine service.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, when troops under Captain Benjamin L.E. Bonneville arrived at Fort Towson in 1838, they were informed by the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Vose, that formal inspection was held every Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. and that preaching was generally heard at 11:00 a.m. Attendance at the latter function was voluntary and optional. However, Vose did point out that passes were not customarily issued on the Sabbath.<sup>37</sup>

A number of new, permanent military posts were established in 1848 as a result of the acquisition of territory from Mexico. In March, 1849, the Chaplain Act of 1838 was amended to authorize the appointment of ten additional chaplains for the army. Moreover, as in the earlier act, the criteria for establishing chaplain posts in the

<sup>36</sup>

Colonel R. Jones to Colonel S. W. Kearny, 3 May 1839, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>37</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel J. Vose to Captain B.L.E. Bonneville, 10 March 1838, Records of Army Commands, Fort Towson, Letters Sent, 1838.

West were based on the size of the command and the degree of isolation from local churches or mission stations.<sup>38</sup> A third act concerning army chaplains was passed in February, 1857. It provided that the Secretary of War, upon the recommendation of the post councils of administration, could sanction a twenty dollar a month salary increase for the chaplains.<sup>39</sup> Although the Act of 1849 increased the number of chaplain posts to thirty, not all these positions were filled. For example, in 1857 there were sixteen posts in the Department of the West, ten of which were authorized as chaplain posts, but only five chaplains were on duty. In the Department of Texas the picture was somewhat better. Four of the fifteen military posts were authorized to have chaplains, yet only three had full time ministers. In the Department of New Mexico three of the fifteen military stations were allowed chaplains, yet only two men were on duty.<sup>40</sup>

No doubt such a state of affairs was normal for the times. For, just as in the case of a school teacher, a minister could expect only a meagre remuneration for long years of service, despite personal satisfaction or academic preparation. Even after the chaplain's salary was raised to

<sup>38</sup>

Johnson, Chaplains of the General Government, 29.

<sup>39</sup>

Office of Chief of Chaplains, American Army Chaplaincy, 20.

<sup>40</sup>

Ibid., 17.

sixty dollars a month and with his remuneration including rations, fuel, and quarters, his compensation still was slightly less than that of a captain. Too, an officer could anticipate subsequent promotions involving increases in salary, allowances, and prestige, whereas the chaplain could not. Moreover, a chaplain, like a parish clergyman, was faced with the task of pleasing the whims and fancies of his coerced congregation, whose attitudes understandably varied from enthusiasm to indifference and opposition. Furthermore, the normal term of office was three years, and the chaplain had to rely upon the support and good wishes of the post council of administration for reappointment.<sup>41</sup>

That the problems of tenure and opposition were real is well illustrated by the case of Reverend William Scull, who was chaplain at Fort Washita from September, 1844, until October, 1847. During the latter year, when Scull applied to the post council for a new appointment, he found that not only the post council but also the commanding officers were opposed to his remaining at the post. Scull looked for outside help and justification for reappointment and wrote to General Mathew Arbuckle to inform him of the disagreeable situation at Fort Washita. In summarizing his difficulties, Scull surmised that Major George Andrews, the commanding

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 21.

officer, opposed Scull's reappointment because of a belief that all church services, compulsory or otherwise, were too bothersome; that the enlisted men's indifference and dissatisfaction probably arose from General Arbuckle's earlier order excusing Roman Catholics from compulsory church attendance; and that the post council would be more enthusiastic if a suitable place for worship were provided. Scull suggested that a solution might be found if Major Andrews were ordered to enforce compulsory church attendance, if the General would rescind his order concerning Catholic soldiers, and if funds were provided for building a church.<sup>42</sup>

Major Andrews was informed of Scull's dissatisfaction and was provided with a copy of the letter to General Arbuckle. Andrews wrote to General Arbuckle to justify his own position and to answer some of Scull's comments. Pointing out that Scull could have used the school building for church services, Andrews indicated that Scull's sermons and services were much too formal for his taste. Furthermore, he observed that Scull's service was of no benefit to the command, because he "had not taken steps to make himself acceptable to the command or the cause of religion." Andrews concluded with the recommendation that the office of Chaplain be abolished at Fort Washita, and with the concurrence of

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Chaplain W. Scull to General M. Arbuckle, 28 March 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

Surgeon William Fullwood, he suggested that any one of several missionaries in the vicinity of the fort could perform such religious services as might be needed from time to time.<sup>43</sup>

Given the opportunity, Scull replied to Andrews' charges and acknowledged that the canons and rubrics of the Episcopal Church were unavoidable and that Andrews and Fullwood had every right to personal opinions concerning the content, length, and presentation of sermons. On the other hand, Scull contended that Andrews had manifested a clear and definite opposition to chaplains and had intimated that the latter would like to see all chaplain posts removed from the frontier. Moreover, Scull asserted, Andrews' professions had been paradoxical, on one hand "papistical and opposed to all Protestants; secondly infidel and opposed to Christianity." To support his view, Scull wrote further that:

It is but a very recent thing that the men generally have the time to attend to public worship.... If, however, the commanding officers will shoot game on Sunday before the Chaplain's door, permit the men at time of service to walk out of the garrison with their guns to hunt, and the 'nine-pin-alley' to be open, it is impossible for an angel to resist the tide of immorality, and be popular.

As far as making himself acceptable to the command by visiting the men in their quarters, Scull indicated that

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<sup>43</sup>

Major G. Andrews to General M. Arbuckle, 20 April 1847, Ibid.

he would have been very willing if the men had so requested him, but inasmuch as there were so many women in the soldiers' rooms, any impromptu visits on his part were out of the question. In conclusion Scull pointed out another possible source for opposition or misunderstanding: he had, at an earlier time and without notifying Major Andrews or Dr. Fullwood, reported a case of infanticide at Fort Washita to departmental headquarters.

As a result of the many charges and counter charges, as well as the disruption of morale, General Arbuckle was instructed by the Adjutant General's Office to conduct a thorough investigation of the entire matter.<sup>44</sup> The findings of the investigation board indicated that Scull had accidentally been trapped in the midst of a military-political feud which had arisen as a result of certain efforts of Major Andrews and the Fort Washita post council to discredit and dishonor Colonel William Harney, the regimental commander. A year earlier Harney had been court martialed but acquitted on charges of insubordination to General Scott in an argument over a command position. In their original search for a chaplain in 1844, the Fort Washita post council of administration gave Reverend George W. Freeman, Bishop of Arkansas, a blank nomination form for him to suggest a possible

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<sup>44</sup> Chaplain W. Scull to General M. Arbuckle, 20 April 1847, Ibid.



candidate. However, while attending an Episcopal convention at Fayetteville, Arkansas, Bishop Freeman chanced to meet Colonel Harney and laid the problem before him. Out of courtesy to Mr. Scull, who happened to be with the two men when the problem was discussed, Harney offered Scull the position. When Scull accepted, Harney sent the nomination paper directly to the Adjutant General's Office instead of returning it for the acquiescence and approval of the Fort Washita post council.

Consequently, when Scull and his family arrived at Fort Washita, they were snubbed by members of the post council, who, both as a group and as individuals, apparently had cause to despise Harney. Scull's position was made more uncomfortable when Major Andrews assigned him the care of the post gardens, in addition to his parochial duties. And as a helper, Scull was given a convicted murderer, who frequently embarrassed the Scull family by consorting with Major Andrews' female servant in the post garden. On other occasions Reverend and Mrs. Scull were ostracized by the post social circle and insulted by Major Andrews's servants. The matter was dropped when it was decided that, since Scull was not a commissioned officer charges could not be preferred by or against him, and that the post council's position could not be disputed in its refusal to reappoint him, inasmuch

as it had not initiated Scull's first appointment.<sup>45</sup>

When Scull appealed that he had leased his house at Fayetteville, Arkansas, for a three year period and could not legally evict his tenant, the obstinate Andrews hastened Scull's departure with a piece of evidence about Scull's previous assignment. Unhappily, some years earlier Scull had run away from a similar disagreeable situation at Fort Gibson. In May, 1841, Scull was asked by the post adjutant either to submit his resignation or immediately repair to his post at Fort Gibson, where his contract had not expired. Scull chose the former in order to be available for a more pleasant assignment.<sup>46</sup>

Having dispensed with Scull's services in 1841, the Fort Gibson post council did not consider acquiring another regular chaplain until 1845, at which time they approached the subject with a certain amount of caution. In considering the application of Reverend Daniel McManus, the council resolved "from time to time to employ Rev. D. McManus, to officiate as Chaplain." Later the resolution was reworded to read: "to officiate as Chaplain for the period of one year, to be re-employed at the expiration of that time,

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<sup>45</sup>  
Bishop G. W. Freeman to General M. Arbuckle, 22 June 1847, Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>  
Chaplain W. Scull to General M. Arbuckle, 1 October 1847, Ibid.; see also Lieutenant S. Simmons to W. Scull, 24 May 1841, Records of Army Commands, Department Two, Western Division, Letters Sent.

should the Council of Administration think proper to do so..."

Thus, even though highly recommended by Bishop Freeman,<sup>47</sup>  
McManus was given only a trial appointment of one year.

McManus proved to be a very successful candidate, for as soon as the salary increase act was passed, the Fort Gibson Council resolved to give McManus an extra twenty dollars a<sup>48</sup> month.

The sacredness of the power of the post council of administration was similarly illustrated in 1860, when Colonel Edwin V. Sumner requested the Secretary of War to remove Reverend James De Pui from his post at Fort Kearny, Nebraska. Colonel Samuel Cooper, the Adjutant General, in replying for the War Department explained that only the post council of administration had the power of appointment and removal of chaplains, and that, regardless of a man's actions<sup>49</sup> or absence from his post, no other means was legal.

In addition to their regular Sunday services, most chaplains conducted Sunday Schools for children at the post. Chaplain Solon W. Manney, for example, officiated as Sunday

<sup>47</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 27 May 1845, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>48</sup>

Ibid., 25 March 1857.

<sup>49</sup>

Colonel S. Cooper to Colonel E.V. Sumner, 21 May 1860, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

School leader and chaplain at Fort Ripley, Minnesota, for  
<sup>50</sup>ten years. At Fort Mackinac, Michigan, the post council so  
 enjoyed their chaplain, Reverend John O'Brien, that not only  
 did they reappoint him for three successive four-year terms,  
 but they also paid for his Sunday School and Common Prayer  
<sup>51</sup>Books from the post fund. Other parochial duties were fre-  
 quently assumed by the post chaplain, such as the solemniza-  
 tion of marriages and the baptism of children. During 1839  
 Reverend Ezekial Gear, chaplain at Fort Snelling, recorded  
 that he had performed two marriage ceremonies and three  
<sup>52</sup>baptisms. Twice during 1845, Chaplain Daniel McManus  
 traveled from his post at Fort Gibson to Fort Smith, Arkansas,  
 to perform two marriages for the daughters of Major Joseph  
 Hoffman. In March Cecelia was married to Captain John B.S.  
 Todd, and in September Amelia was united with Captain Edmund  
<sup>53</sup>B. Alexander.

Inasmuch as the troops usually went into the field  
 during the summer months and the garrison schools were not

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<sup>50</sup>George C. Tanner, "History of Fort Ripley, 1849-1859,"  
 Collections of the Minnesota State Historical Society, X  
 (1905), 188.

<sup>51</sup>Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac,  
 8 May 1843; 1 September 1843, Records of Army Commands,  
 Department of the West.

<sup>52</sup>Tanner, "Early Episcopal Churches and Missions in  
 Minnesota," 206.

<sup>53</sup>The Arkansas Intelligencer, March 22, 1845;  
 September 6, 1845.

in session, post chaplains were given annual vacations at that time. Chaplain Ezekial G. Gear received a sixty-day leave of absence from his post at Fort Snelling, commencing June 14, 1847, after which time he was instructed to return to his station.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, at Fort Arbuckle, Chaplain Daniel McManus applied to the post council for a vacation and was awarded two successive leaves totaling five months extending from September, 1858, to January 31, 1859.<sup>55</sup>

Places of worship varied according to the interest in religious activities at different posts. In 1839 at Fort Snelling there was no chapel per se, but a small room in one of the barracks was used for religious services for both military and civilian personnel.<sup>56</sup> The chapel at Fort Leavenworth was a building which served both as church and school but was large enough to accomodate most of the command. Here in the 1840's Reverend Henry Gregory, and in the 1850's Reverend Leander Ker, held regularly scheduled Sunday services.<sup>57</sup> In the 1850's the chapel at Fort Ripley, Minnesota, was "a simple room decently fitted up, no doubt by

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<sup>54</sup> Special Order No. 45, Fort Snelling, 14 June 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>55</sup> Fort Arbuckle Post Returns, 1856, 1857, 1858, microfilm copy in Oklahoma State Historical Society Library, N.W.R. 562.

<sup>56</sup> Tanner, "Early Episcopal Churches and Missions in Minnesota," 205.

<sup>57</sup> Shindler, Public Worship at Fort Leavenworth, 14.

the ladies of the garrison, supplemented by the generosity of the officers..." wherein a strictly voluntary service was held on Sunday.<sup>58</sup>

In 1851 a building of a more permanent nature was erected when the Secretary of War authorized Reverend Charles C. Townsend to proceed with his chapel construction project as long as there was no cost to the United States government. At the same time, General Arbuckle was instructed to aid Townsend in the selection of a suitable site on the Fort Smith military reservation.<sup>59</sup> Townsend had been sent to Fort Smith on the recommendation of Bishop George W. Freeman of Arkansas to replace Reverend Daniel McManus, who had accepted a position as chaplain at Fort Gibson.<sup>60</sup> Posts as military chaplains offered substantial salaries and frequently enticed missionaries of the Episcopal Church in Arkansas away from their rather small civilian congregations. This had been the case with Reverend William Scull and Reverend Daniel McManus, Townsend's predecessors, who had found conditions in their missions at Fayetteville and Fort Smith, Arkansas, highly unsatisfactory and had been lured away by offers from the army.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Tanner, "History of Fort Ripley," 187.

<sup>59</sup> General R. Jones to General M. Arbuckle, 18 March 1851, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

<sup>60</sup> Journal of the Proceedings of Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in General Convention (New York, 1850), 268.

<sup>61</sup> Journal of the Proceedings...1847, 198.

Bishops Leonodas Polk of Louisiana, George W. Freeman of Arkansas, and Jackson Kemper of Wisconsin and Minnesota, represented the Episcopal Church when they made annual visits throughout their respective diocese. In doing so they frequently visited outlying military stations in the West. Mature men in their late fifties or early sixties, these circuit riding Bishops braved the elements and the dangers of the trail to bring the "comforts of religion" to all, including soldiers. Bishop Polk, a former military man himself, visited Fort Gibson for a week in January, 1841. While there he preached almost every day and upon his departure was requested by the officers to aid them in securing the services of a permanent chaplain. Through his colleague, Bishop Freeman, Polk was able to make arrangements for a part time clergyman, then later for the election of a permanent Chaplain who turned out to be William Scull. After his Fort Gibson visit, Bishop Polk traveled to Fort Smith on January 22, when he baptized one of the soldier's children. On January 31, Polk arrived at Fort Towson, where he preached and baptized two infants.

In the spring of 1844 the Reverend James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee, visited Fort Smith where, after preaching on several successive Sundays, he was cordially entertained

by General Zachary Taylor and members of his staff. Earlier in March 1844, the Bishop had been kindly received by the Janus-faced Major George Andrews at Fort Towson. Later Otey gave high praise to the general receptions and safe-keeping accorded him and his party by the United States Army,<sup>63</sup> while traveling through Indian territory.

At the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1844, the Reverend George W. Freeman was elected Missionary Bishop of the Southwest, which included not only his former diocese of Arkansas, but also Texas and Indian territory. Starting his rounds almost immediately, Freeman visited Fort Smith early in 1845, where he preached to a large gathering of army officers who happened to be at Western Division headquarters for courts martial. Traveling alternately by river steamer and horseback, Bishop Freeman visited Forts Gibson, Washita, and Towson in Indian territory and stopped later at San Antonio, Texas. At the latter city he was petitioned by the populace to make arrangements for a missionary preacher. This project was not immediately accomplished, but when a permanent army post was established there during the Mexican War, Reverend John F. Fish accepted a<sup>64</sup> position of chaplain at the fort.

<sup>63</sup>

Journal of the Proceedings...1847, 223.

<sup>64</sup>

John N. Norton, Life of Bishop Freeman of Arkansas (New York, 1867), 125; 170.



In the northwest, Bishop Jackson Kemper experienced similar problems and privations in keeping his far-flung diocese well organized. At one time, in 1856, he had five army chaplains under his jurisdiction, viz.: Ezekial G. Gear at Fort Snelling, Joshua Sweet at Fort Ridgely, Richard Vaux at Fort Laramie, James De Pui at Fort Kearny, and Solon W. Manny at Fort Ripley. In a report to the Episcopal General Convention in 1856, Bishop Kemper pointed proudly to the record of Chaplain Gear who, during the previous year, had baptized seventeen persons, married seven couples, and confirmed one soldier. At the same time, however, he spoke sadly of Chaplain Sweet's difficulties at Fort Ridgely, where there was a very small congregation and an even smaller meeting place.<sup>65</sup> For many years the army posts in Minnesota were centers for missionary work for the Episcopal church, which instructed the army chaplains to travel among the Indians and to nearby white settlements whenever possible. By 1856 the work had been successful enough to warrant two men in the area of Forts Ripley and Snelling. Prior to Chaplain Manny's appointment at Fort Ripley, Reverend Ezekial Gear served both Fort Snelling and Fort Ripley, as well as

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Journal of the Proceedings...Episcopal Church... 1856, 271; see also Greenough White, An Apostle of the Western Church (New York, 1900), passim; and, Johnson, Chaplains of the General Government, 68f.

the territory around each.<sup>66</sup>

At posts where no chaplain was available, local preachers or visiting clergymen oftentimes would be invited to conduct religious services for the soldiers. When the garrison at Fort Washita lost its regular chaplain in 1852, Dr. Rodney Glisan and his fellow officers took advantage of the presence of a group of migrating Mormons who were camping near the post during the summer of 1853. Professing some interest in the Mormon creed, Glisan's commanding officer requested a Mormon Elder, a Mr. Thomas, to preach to them -- which the gentleman did on three occasions. According to Dr. Glisan the first two sermons "sounded very much like good old hardshell baptist harangues, but the last one contained the doctrinal parts of the faith." After the latter sermon, Glisan recorded, many of the Mormon party, having heard statements of faith for the first time, expressed a desire to return home rather than continue to the "promised land."<sup>67</sup>

Usually a Catholic priest had a difficult time in gaining entrance to any military post. For example, one of the first missionaries in the vicinity of Fort Snelling in the early 1840's was Father Galtier, who reported to his bishop that there were very few people in the area and only

<sup>66</sup>

Tanner, "History of Fort Ripley," 182f.

<sup>67</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 123; see also Johnson, Chaplains of the General Government, 67.

a handful of them were Catholics. Reverend Galtier admitted that he had been treated kindly, but felt that he was not able to carry on his work too openly because of an under-current of anti-Catholic feeling. Galtier mentioned in his report that two soldiers of Major Joseph Plympton's command had come to him for spiritual help, but that they were not converts, merely repenting members of the church.<sup>68</sup> In the 1850's a similar situation existed near Fort Ripley, where Father Vivaldi of the Catholic Church operated a mission station among the Indians. The atmosphere was somewhat more pleasant for him, however, for on a number of occasions he was invited to preach at the fort, and in one particular instance had an amiable conversation in Latin with Chaplain Manny on a variety of ecclesiastical matters.<sup>69</sup>

An unpleasant scene was created at Fort Gibson in 1847 when Lieutenant Charles J. Coutts complained to the Adjutant General's Office that Lieutenant Colonel Gustavus Loomis, the commanding officer at the post, had refused to allow a Father Walsh to preach at the post chapel. Colonel Roger Jones, the Adjutant General, thereupon sent Loomis a blistering letter admonishing him severely for his open anti-

<sup>68</sup>

Ambrose McNulty, "The Chapel of St. Paul and the Beginnings of the Catholic Church in Minnesota," Collections of the Minnesota State Historical Society, X (1904), 236.

<sup>69</sup>

Tanner, "History of Fort Ripley," 187.

constitutional and anti-Catholic views.<sup>70</sup> Jones' attitude was somewhat softer in a later letter, in which he apologized to Loomis for the earlier rebuff. Jones had investigated the matter and had received a note from Father Walsh, who indicated that it was he and not Colonel Loomis who had declined the use of the Fort Gibson chapel. However, even in the second letter to Loomis, Colonel Jones did reemphasize the necessity of respecting all religious beliefs and creeds within the traditional scope of the complete separation of church and state in the United States.<sup>71</sup> Ironically, two years earlier Loomis had shown his economical views by issuing an order within his command to allow any soldiers, who might be spared from military duties, a three-day leave of absence to attend a revival meeting in the vicinity of Fort Gibson. Meanwhile, Major George Andrews, who was having a preliminary bout with Chaplain Scull at Fort Towson, issued an intermediate order that no men at Fort Towson could have time off without special written permission from him personally. When this order came to Loomis' attention at regimental headquarters, it was immediately countermanded. In a blunt letter to Andrews, Loomis pointed out that if men in Andrews' command could be given time off to attend horse races and

<sup>70</sup>

Colonel R. Jones to Lieutenant Colonel G. Loomis, 24 July 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>71</sup>

Colonel R. Jones to Lieutenant Colonel G. Loomis, 18 December 1847, Ibid.

Indian ball games, as they had on a number of occasions, then certainly it would not be amiss to allow leaves of absence on week days for religious exercises.<sup>72</sup>

Most denominations were represented among the army chaplains, yet of eighty official appointees between 1813 and 1856, only three were Roman Catholic priests. There were many Catholics in the army during the mid-nineteenth century, especially among the German and Irish immigrants, but they rarely formed the majority of a given company or garrison. Moreover, since most of the officers were Protestant, it was unlikely that a Catholic chaplain would be chosen from a list of potential candidates.<sup>73</sup> During the Mexican War, however, President James Polk indicated that the appointment of a number of Catholic chaplains might deter desertions among the volunteer troops, especially where the majority were Irish Catholics. Consequently, two priests, Fathers McElroy and Rey, joined the army in Texas and Mexico, but were not awarded the official status of chaplain. Several years after the war, however, two Catholic priests did become official chaplains. Father Ignacio Ramires received an appointment at Fort Monterey, California, and Father Michael Sheehan joined the garrison at Fort Belknap, Texas. Little is known

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<sup>72</sup> Lieutenant Colonel G. Loomis to Major G. Andrews, 12 September 1845, Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Office of Chief of Chaplains, American Army Chaplaincy, 22f.

about the latter officer, except that he served at Fort Belknap between 1855 and 1859.<sup>74</sup>

While the majority of officers and men were professed Protestants of one type or another, one denomination could claim the numerical majority in the number of chaplain appointments. Of the forty-two positions which were filled between 1828 and 1857, twenty-five were filled by Episcopal clergymen. A number of explanations for this phenomenon are evident. During much of the period an Episcopal clergyman was official chaplain at the Military Academy, from which point a certain amount of influence could be transmitted to the War Department. There also was the possibility that many officers felt that the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer would lend itself well to military ceremonies because of its formal wording and multi-purpose contents.<sup>75</sup> Another possible answer might be the fact that at most military posts the chaplain had the double function of spiritual leader and schoolmaster. Episcopal clergy, like those of the Roman Church, were required to complete college or seminary training programs prior to their ordination. Ministers of other Protestant denominations in some cases may well have been men of letters and of unimpeachable intellectual ability,

<sup>74</sup>  
Ibid., 21.

<sup>75</sup>  
Ibid., 23f.

but more often in the West followers of the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian sects received their calls from above or from a particular congregation. Thereafter they received their ministerial status from practice preaching with little or no formal college training.

There was hardly unanimous feeling in Congress when the various Chaplain Acts were passed to authorize the appointment, remuneration, and control of military chaplains. Many Congressmen held strong views on economizing in military appropriations, while others were more concerned about the spirit and letter of a clear definition of separation of church and state. While there may have been a recognizable undercurrent of opposition during the passage of the first act in 1838, the anti-chaplain movement was strongest in the late 1850's. It was discovered that during the period 1838 to 1860 a number of men were attracted by the pay and allowances of chaplains, and yet pursued the occupation as a sort of avocation. In one or two instances a chaplain's benefice was secured through political agreements. The recipient was neither prepared nor willing to perform the duties of post chaplain, for some maintained the nebulous state of "waiting orders" or "on leave" while holding a concurrent secular position. In other cases it is found that a retired clerk or aged sergeant was given the job of attending to the "spiritual ministrations" of a military unit.

The anti-chaplain movement was given impetus in 1854 when over three thousand clergymen in the United States petitioned Congress to abstain from passing the Kansas-Nebraska Bill on grounds that the South was conspiring to extend slavery into the West. Members of Congress and numbers of citizens maintained that it was no business of the clergy to attempt to interfere in matters of state and politics. The opposition argued that if the clergy outside of government organizations showed such partisanship, then certainly chaplains in Congress and the military branches would likewise be biased. The anti-chaplain forces centered their argument on the historical separation of church and state in the United States and on the possibility of economizing to the extent of \$250,000 annually if no chaplains were appointed.<sup>77</sup> As an answer to possible pro-chaplain sentiment, it was suggested that if the army needed religious services and leaders, then clergymen could "forsake the reward of Government gold" and enlist like any other man. As an alternative it was also suggested that from time to time clergymen could be hired and paid by groups of officers and men who particularly wished such help, rather than be paid by the tax payers of the United States. One of the main sources for contention among the Congressional anti-chaplain forces was the tradition of having a chaplain for each house. A number of Congressmen

<sup>77</sup> Johnson, Chaplains of the General Government, 19f.



felt that the position had become a political plum and that any pecuniary reward was too great for the small service of mubling a short prayer at the beginning of each session. <sup>78</sup>

While a number of army officers had expressed disparate opinions in regard to the matter of church and state -- for example the diverse opinions of Lieutenant Colonel Loomis and Major Andrews -- the post council of administration at Fort Randall, Nebraska attacked the problem from a different angle. At the council meeting of February 28, 1859, the problem arose of selecting a chaplain, part of whose duties would be the operation of the post school. While it was agreed that there should be a post school and, possibly, a chaplain, the combination of the two was deemed undesirable. The sentiments of the opponents of the combined plan were expressed by Captain Nathaniel Lyon who feared that if Fort Randall were "made a Chaplain post for the purpose of indoctrinating the school pupils or other persons of this command with religious tenets...the letter and spirit of our institutions would be violated." Lyon also objected to the Sunday School method of teaching the doctrine of penance and forgiveness for crime. He felt that such a principle was inconsistent with the soldier's daily experience that crime was known only in terms of punishment. The matter was closed during the council's next meeting when the

<sup>78</sup>

Ibid., 21f.

post commander, Major Henry W. Wessells, concurred with Captain Lyon's opinion, but nevertheless approved the appointment of a chaplain on the grounds that the majority of the post council favored one and that the office was still recognized by law. Opposition was subsequently silenced when the "divinely inspired crusade" -- the Civil War -- commenced in 1861. Chaplains were appointed in both Union and Confederate armies, and the office has been maintained to the present time.<sup>79</sup>

Apart from a possible philosophic correlation between religion and education, there was a definite human relationship at military posts in that the direction of learning and praying was supervised by the same person, the post chaplain. Education like religion was a recognizable part of the pattern of life at most frontier military posts, for many married officers and men were anxious to raise their children in civilized surroundings. During the years before the chaplains were authorized for the western military posts, primary education was administered either by a salaried civilian or by an enlisted man who had had teaching experience. For example, an order was issued at Fort Atkinson, Iowa in the early 1820's to establish a post school with a

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<sup>79</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Randall, 28 February 1859; 3 March 1859, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West; see also Office of Chief of Chaplains, American Army Chaplaincy, Ch. V, et passim.

Sergeant Mumford as teacher. Mumford's compensation in terms of dollars and cents is unknown, but the post order indicated that he was to be accorded respect and that he was authorized to purchase two gallons of whiskey per month. If Mumford was not respected, at least he could be popular. The school was a success, however, and was so strictly superintended that on one occasion two soldiers were severely admonished when they neglected to send their respective children to school.<sup>80</sup>

When John Marsh graduated from Harvard College in 1823 he was recommended to Colonel Josiah Snelling, commanding officer at Fort Snelling, for the position of private tutor to the children at the post. Marsh wanted to become a physician, but accepted the tutoring position in order to earn enough money to pursue his medical studies.<sup>81</sup> From 1823 to 1825, he taught reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, and rhetoric to a group of ten children, including one or two of Colonel Snelling's. In a room adjacent to the commander's office, Marsh began his ordeal every morning at 9:00 a.m., handling a group whose ages ranged from four years to twenty years and whose breadth of interest were somewhat proportional to their ages. Evidently, he may be credited with some success, inasmuch as Colonel Snelling's

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Wesley, "Life at a Frontier Post," 208f.

81

Lyman, John Marsh, Pioneer, 50f.

daughter was sufficiently prepared to enter a finishing school in Washington, D.C.<sup>82</sup> About the same time, a group of officers' wives, including Mrs. Abigail Snelling, were studying French under the direction of Constantine Beltrami, a soldier stationed at Fort Snelling who, prior to his migration to the United States, claimed membership in the army of Napoleon I. Incidentally, such informal education was the first Mrs. Snelling had ever had.<sup>83</sup>

As early as 1835, the General Regulations provided that post and company funds could be used for the education of soldiers' children at a post school, although, at the same time, no specific mention was made of a chaplain or other person as school master.<sup>84</sup> As has been noted, when chaplains were appointed at a number of posts in 1838, the duties of schoolmaster automatically devolved upon all incumbents. In War Department Order 29, 1838, special mention was made to provide not only for officers' children but for those of enlisted personnel also.<sup>85</sup> Subsequent editions of the General Regulations gave continued official sanction to

<sup>82</sup>

Ibid., 62f.

<sup>83</sup>

Ellet, Pioneer Women of the West, 330f.

<sup>84</sup>

War Department, General Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1835, 86.

<sup>85</sup>

War Department Order No. 29, 18 August 1838, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

the chaplains double duties, which were carried out with  
<sup>86</sup>  
 considerable success by most sincere men.

If chapels in the wilderness were rare then school-  
 houses were rarer, and, consequently, were much appreciated  
 and well tended. A number of Protestant missionary groups  
 operated schools for Indians in villages adjacent to several  
 frontier posts during the mid-nineteenth century, but such  
 facilities were ill-suited for the purposes of educating  
 military offspring inasmuch as many Indians were struggling  
 to attain a working knowledge of English before they at-  
 tempted other studies. Such facilities were, however, often  
 inspected during annual examination sessions by military  
 and Indian Office personnel.  
<sup>87</sup> The post school, then, repre-  
 sented a nucleus of western civilization, and it is quite  
 likely that where no public schools existed, the post school  
 accomodated children from neighboring civil communities.  
 Such a situation was particularly true in the Southwest  
 where the problem of assimilating non-Anglo-Saxon peoples,  
 who were acquired with Mexican territory, was very pressing  
 for a number of years.  
<sup>88</sup> For example, after Colonel Joseph

<sup>86</sup>

War Department, General Regulations...1841, 34.

<sup>87</sup>

Anderson, (ed.), "Letters from Mackinac," 187;  
 see also Neill, "Occurrences in and around Fort Snelling,"  
 131.

<sup>88</sup>

Office of Chief of Chaplains, American Army  
 Chaplaincy, 19f.

K.F. Mansfield inspected Ringgold Barracks, Texas, in the summer of 1856, he recommended that it, rather than Fort Brown, be a chaplain post and staffed "with a man of talent and industry to fill it. A school here would very much benefit the neighborhood as well as the post children." He recommended also that Fort McIntosh be made a chaplain post "to regulate and improve the population out as well as in the garrison." On the other hand, since Fort Brown was so close to Brownsville, Texas where there were schools and churches, the post school was discontinued in order to make a chaplain's service available to other posts in the Department of Texas.<sup>89</sup>

Acting as a school committee or a board of education, the post council of administration, in addition to hiring the schoolmaster, regulated the hours of morning and afternoon sessions and decided upon appropriate vacation periods. At Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, the post council prescribed that school was to be in session from 8:00 a.m. until noon and from 2:00 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. During the months of July and August, the council decided that because of the hot weather a morning session would be sufficient for the good of the children.<sup>90</sup> When the Fort Gibson post council met

<sup>89</sup>  
Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield, Inspection Report, Department of Texas, 1856, A.G.O., 31; 38; 48 (old pagination).

<sup>90</sup>  
Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, 8 July 1856, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

in February, 1845, it was decided that the school hours there would be from 9:00 a.m. until noon and from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. All other rules concerning the mechanical operation of the school were left to the chaplain's discretion, except that the council reserved the right to visit and inspect the post school at any time during the school year. At a subsequent meeting the Fort Gibson council revised the school hours so that the morning session would not exceed three hours and the afternoon session two hours. The exact hours of meeting and dismissal were left to the chaplain so that he could arrange his teaching and pastoral duties in a busy daily schedule.<sup>91</sup> Two years later the post council approved a petition from the chaplain calling for the cancellation of afternoon classes until further notice inasmuch as school had been in session for seven weeks without any respite for teacher and students.<sup>92</sup>

In 1854 Chaplain Daniel McManus received the consent of the post council of administration at Fort Gibson to dismiss school for the months of August and September on account of the excessively warm and unhealthy climate in that region.<sup>93</sup> McManus followed the same practice in 1847 and 1848, during

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Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 13 February 1845; 20 September 1845, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

92

Ibid., 29 April, 1847.

93

D. McManus to Lieutenant T. Williams, 9 August 1854, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

which years he vacationed at an Episcopal Mission station at Fayetteville, Arkansas. His vacation for 1847 covered the months of July and August as a premium for having operated the post school for six consecutive weeks without a day off. In 1848, because of an extended spring session and unseasonably hot weather, McManus was given the months of July, August, and half of September as a vacation period.<sup>94</sup>

When Chaplain McManus had first arrived at Fort Gibson in 1845, the post council authorized the founding of a night school if the chaplain were willing to operate it and if there were enough soldiers interested in self improvement. The council also agreed to pay additional compensation to the chaplain if he undertook the extra duties.<sup>95</sup> Apparently the chaplain found his combined duties of teacher and preacher too time consuming or else there were too few students among the soldiers. It was not until August 1847 that the night

<sup>94</sup>  
Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 29 June 1847; 30 June 1848, Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>  
Ibid., 13 February 1845. Chaplain McManus was born at Carrick-on-Shannon, Ireland, in 1815. He received his education at the Royal College of Maynooth in Dublin and in 1841 was ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. Very shortly thereafter he migrated to the United States where he received an appointment as a chaplain at a convent in New York City. Within a few years he renounced Romanism and was admitted into the Protestant Episcopal Church by the Rt. Reverend B.T. Onderdonk, Bishop of New York, in 1844. McManus started a mission church at Van Buren, Arkansas and in 1845 accepted the position of chaplain at Fort Gibson. He served as chaplain there and at Fort Towson until the outbreak of the Civil War when he returned to his pastoral duties in Arkansas. He died at Fort Smith in 1886. Diocesan Journal, Diocese of Arkansas, 1887.



school actually materialized when the council re-authorized the arrangement and proposed to pay a night schoolmaster fifty cents a month for each soldier who attended. After the school had been open for two months, the council revised its salary schedule and agreed to pay a Mr. J. McCormack a flat salary of fifteen dollars a month to operate the post night school.<sup>96</sup>

In September, 1855, the Fort Gibson council hit upon a new system when one of the bandsmen, a Private Howard, volunteered to conduct night classes in the three R's. Howard was to receive five dollars a month for the first ten students and an additional two dollars and fifty cents for every ten students who subsequently enrolled. Within two months the commanding officer, Colonel Henry Wilson, reviewed the matter and the council concurred with his advice to revise the salary schedule so that Howard was paid five dollars a month regardless of the number who enrolled.<sup>97</sup> Perhaps the schoolmaster's salary was based on experience, training, and results, for Private Howard appears to have been ten dollars less valuable than his predecessor Mr. McCormack. In another instance at Fort Randall, Nebraska Territory in 1857, Sergeant Major Kroutingier received a

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 30 August 1847; 1 November 1847.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 3 September 1855; 30 October 1855.

somewhat higher rate, thirty-five dollars for teaching night school for two months.<sup>98</sup>

School expenses, other than salaries, were appropriated from time to time by the post council. Books, paper, ink, quills, pencils, and other supplies were usually ordered by the schoolmaster through the post sutler who ordered the materials in bulk quantities and billed the post council at the end of the term for materials and postage. The council more or less automatically approved all such expenditures.<sup>99</sup> Ordinarily post school expenses were not high. For example, the post school at Fort Mackinac was operated at a cost of six dollars for books and supplies for a six month period, and between 1840 and 1843 the post council never had to spend more than ten dollars for equipment.<sup>100</sup> Heating and maintenance were inevitable problems in any climate. One of the regular expenses at Fort Gibson was the purchase of a twenty-five cent broom every month from the post sutler for the school house. Other maintenance problems were usually handled by the post carpenter or mason. Heating the olive drab schoolroom was accomplished by feeding large quantities

<sup>98</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Randall, March, 1857, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>99</sup> Post Journal, Fort Gibson, 1845-57, Treasurer's Reports, March and April, 1847, Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac, 1840-43, passim.

of wood into a cavernous fireplace. The Fort Gibson council treated the matter historically by appropriating the necessary amount of two dollars per cord per month for the six months preceding the April meeting of the council in 1852.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, the post council at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota anticipated the probability of using a cord of wood per month during the school year and, consequently, appropriated enough money at the beginning of each year to purchase the required amount.<sup>102</sup> In the extraordinary situation where a post supported both a day and a night school, the additional expense of candles for illuminating the latter was cheerfully appropriated by the post council whenever the need arose. The usual cost was about two dollars and fifty cents per month, which appears to be comparable to the cost of lighting the average home today.<sup>103</sup>

The school curriculum of the post was not unlike that of any New England town school of the mid-nineteenth century. Writing materials included pens, pencils, copy books, and the inevitable slate. Studies in language and grammar were supplemented by the standard Webster's Dictionary

<sup>101</sup>  
Post Journal, Fort Gibson, 16 April 1852, et passim, Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>  
Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, 3 November 1858, Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>  
Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Randall, Nebraska Territory, Treasurer's Reports, January and February, 1857, Ibid.

and Smith's Grammar Book. The first of the three R's was practiced with the use of graded Eclectic readers and pictured primers for the beginners, and for the advanced readers, any of the library holdings which normally included contemporary English novels, histories, and collections of essays and sermons. Studies in science included the use of Davies' Graded Arithmetic Book, Mitchell's Primary Geography, and a standard atlas. Thus, while the chronological ages of the students may have varied considerably, the function of the post school was merely to provide a basic primary education of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The administration of the school was in keeping with the contemporary concept of providing a free, public education for the post children and for some in the immediate vicinity.

While the post school offered the rudiments of reading and writing, most officers' children completed their education at Eastern preparatory or finishing schools. So important was such schooling that General George Brookes was awarded a leave of absence from his post at Fort Crawford late in 1837 to take his children to a school at Gambier, Ohio. The Brookes' children did not lack for parental supervision during their first year, for the General was given subsequent

104

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, 30 December 1857, Ibid; see also Alice F. Tyler, Freedom's Ferment (Minneapolis, 1944), Ch. X.

extensions until the opening of river navigation in the spring  
of 1838.<sup>105</sup> More often, however, children were separated  
from their parents during the school year. Zachary Taylor  
wrote the following observation to Ethan Allen Hitchcock in  
1841: "Dick is at a preparatory school in Lancaster, Massa-  
chusetts, about forty miles from Boston, but I am apprehensive  
[he is] not doing overly well as he is dissatisfied and talks  
of returning home or wishing to do so, but I hope for the  
best."<sup>106</sup> In one case a mother's loneliness and concern pre-  
vented a son's educational development, until the outspoken  
George Featherstonhaugh arrived on the scene. While travel-  
ing through upper Minnesota in 1835, Featherstonhaugh stopped  
at Fort Snelling long enough to enjoy the hospitality of  
Major and Mrs. John Bliss. At the same time Featherstonhaugh  
observed that their only son was lacking in the fundamentals  
of education since no post school had been established, and  
yet the lad seemed to be very intelligent.<sup>107</sup> The boy ac-  
companied Featherstonhaugh on a preliminary geological  
survey and exploration of the upper Mississippi River during  
which time he continued to impress the Englishman with his

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105

General G. Brookes to General H. Atkinson, 5  
August 1837 and endorsements, Records of Army Commands,  
Department of the West, Letters Received.

106

Z. Taylor to E. Hitchcock, 3 November 1841, MS.  
in Taylor Papers.

107

Featherstonhaugh, A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay  
Sotar, I, 266f.

natural abilities. Upon their return to Fort Snelling, Featherstonhaugh convinced the Major and his wife that the boy needed and deserved a formal education. Whereupon, he offered to accompany the boy to the East coast, where he promised to place him in a good academy. Mrs. Bliss finally consented when Featherstonhaugh further promised to watch over the lad for a year, whenever possible.<sup>108</sup> Finally, a number of sons followed in the footsteps of their fathers, and occasionally grandfathers, in accepting appointments to the Military Academy where they usually shone because of their life long experience and association with the military career.<sup>109</sup>

While the mental and moral fibres of the soldier's personality were cared for in the appointment of chaplains to frontier posts, corruptions and backsliding continued to exist. In the midst of a general national reform movement remarkable progress was made in many fields especially in public health and preventative medicine which ultimately affected even the frontier posts. The chaplain and the surgeon frequently worked together in providing physical and mental therapy for ailing troops.

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<sup>108</sup>

Ibid., II, 16.

<sup>109</sup>

Cullum, Biographical Register, I and II, passim.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HEALTH

Soldiers expect to face the occupational hazards of their profession whether they meet crudely-armed aborigines or well-equipped foreign armies. The S.I.'s of the nineteenth century, like those today, were confronted with the timeless problem of maintaining reasonably good health under a variety of climatic conditions. Weather, food, water, clothing, shelter, and general garrison duties varied from one post to another: each an important factor to the health of the frontier soldier. Moreover, one's life expectancy in the nineteenth century was recognizably short, so that by 1860 there were not too many old soldiers who could claim fame in the gentle process of "fading away."

Specific sites for western military posts were largely determined by the availability of an adequate water supply, timber resources for construction and fuel, and good soil for forage and gardens. <sup>1</sup> While such criteria proved to be strategic in many ways, there was no practical way of

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<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant D.P. Woodbury to General J. Totten, 10 November 1847, typed copy in Nebraska State Historical Society Library.

controlling streams from which the drinking water was usually obtained. During the summer months in the areas south of the Missouri River, large and small streams dried up from the intense heat and lack of rain. In some places the streams flowed so slowly, or else did not flow at all, that the water became brackish and dangerous for human consumption. On the other hand, low lying areas, where army posts were often constructed, became inundated during the spring rainy season, causing much damage to buildings and equipment. Later, when summer weather approached and adjacent swampy areas stagnated under the hot sun, consequences became apparent.

Although the theories of insect-borne and the germ origin of diseases were unproved and generally unknown before the 1850's, there was an occasional recognized correlation between water conditions and general health. However, until after the Civil War, no practical method was developed for the purification of water by natural or chemical means. The correlation must have been apparent to General Mathew Arbuckle in 1834, when he petitioned the Adjutant General's Office for the removal of Fort Gibson on the Neosho River, to another site four or five miles south of the stream on higher ground. Arbuckle attributed the great number of

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<sup>2</sup>  
Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Freeman, Report of Inspection of the Eighth Military Department, 1953, 2 July 1853, 37 (old pagination) A.G.O. File F 29.



deaths and frequent illnesses between 1824 and 1834 to the unhealthy location of the post. The danger was accentuated by the unpredictable Neosho River and by overcrowded living conditions. Consequently, he advised that better barracks and a new hospital should be constructed as minimum health precautions.<sup>3</sup>

The problem of storing drinking water frequently was solved by constructing cisterns. Rain water was drained from the roofs of post buildings into large, underground storage tanks. A temporary dilemma developed at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, in 1852 when one of the cisterns under the main parade ground collapsed. The dangers to pedestrians and general health were resolved when a new tank, costing one hundred and ninety-two dollars for materials and labor, was constructed. It is important to note that included in the materials for reconstruction were one hundred bushels of charcoal. This charcoal evidently was used as a chemical agent to absorb various non-soluble impurities.<sup>4</sup> Lieutenant Colonel William G. Freeman discovered during his tour of inspection of Texas posts in 1853 that there was a desperate need for pure drinking water at Fort Brown, which was located

<sup>3</sup>  
General M. Arbuckle to Colonel Roger Jones, 31 December 1834, Fort Gibson Letter Book 1834-36, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>4</sup>  
Lieutenant R.W. Kirkham to Lieutenant W.S. Hancock, 29 December 1852, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

at the mouth of the Rio Grande. The post was located on a large fresh water stream, but so much refuse and mineral matter accumulated at the mouth that the water was not fit for use by the garrison. Freeman recommended the immediate construction of a twelve thousand gallon cistern, the cost of which, estimated on the basis of local labor and prices of materials, would be less than one hundred and fifty dollars.<sup>5</sup>

The construction and maintainance of suitable quarters should be ranked next in importance to the selection of a site near water, timber, and farm land. The type of shelter varied considerably for two basic reasons: first, building materials were determined necessarily by the location of the post in relation to forestation, stone, sand, or such soil as could be used for adobe buildings, and secondly, by the estimated length of time that the particular garrison would be occupied by troops. In either case, troops usually spent several months in tents prior to their occupying new wood or stone barracks. But because of the non-durable nature of many military structures, housing was a constant basic health problem to most commanding officers and surgeons.

When Colonel Joseph K.F. Mansfield inspected the Texas posts in 1856, he found that troops living in tents at

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<sup>5</sup> Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Freeman, Report of Inspection, 1853, 4 July 1853, 37f, (old pagination), A.G.O.

Fort McIntosh, near Laredo on the Rio Grande, were suffering from the intense heat. Partial relief was obtained in several cases, Mansfield observed, when some enterprising soldiers constructed shade arbors of brush and scrub oak branches.<sup>6</sup> Three years earlier, Lieutenant Colonel Freeman had reported that troops at Fort Ewell, on the Nueces River, were living in tents while adobe barracks were being constructed. Freeman had observed, however, that none of the tents had flooring and whenever the summer torrential rains came down the valley the tents were no longer habitable.<sup>7</sup> At the same period, troops at Fort McKavett, near the source of the San Saba River, had moved only recently from tents into unfinished adobe buildings. But Freeman had noted during his inspection of the latter post in 1853 that the men were little better off since the new quarters lacked floors, windows, or doors.<sup>8</sup>

Recommendations had been made from time to time to the War Department to reconstruct many of the older wooden forts on the frontier using brick or stone. It was found that most wooden structures deteriorated within five years because of severe and extreme weather conditions, plus the

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<sup>6</sup> Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield, Report of Inspection, Department of Texas, 1856, 19 May 1856, 39ff. (old pagination.)

<sup>7</sup> Freeman, Report of Inspection, 11 June 1853, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 16 August 1853, 71.

fact that the wood lay exposed to weather without the protection of leaded paints. Usually the only exterior preservative was a thin coat of white wash. In 1827 General Edmund P. Gaines inspected Fort Jesup, Louisiana, and recommended that the post be rebuilt either with stone or brick. Gaines observed that the roofs were beginning to decay and leak, thus causing a serious health meance for the men. It was nine years, however, before the funds were secured for the renovation of the post.<sup>9</sup> After his inspection of Fort Jesup, Gaines traveled north to Fort Crawford, where he noticed a parallel condition of decay. The former post was located in an extremely warm, humid climate, while the latter was in a cold one. Gaines attributed the frequent illnesses at Fort Crawford to the decaying wooden buildings and the consequent unhealthy living and sleeping quarters. He indicated that the cost of repairing the post would be high, but that if the post were to remain an essential element of the western frontier system, then relocation on higher ground and rebuilding with stone would be worthwhile. Despite an increase of fifty per cent when stone rather than wood was used, Gaines strongly recommended using the more durable material.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 114f.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 123f.

In addition to the general state of decay of various posts, sleeping conditions were found to be particularly unhealthy. In 1834 Colonel George Croghan reported poor conditions at Forts Mackinac and Brady in the northern defense area. Most of the bunks were in defective condition, especially the lower tiers. In the latter instances the mattresses rested directly on the barracks' floors, which usually remained damp some time after daily washing. Most noticeable was the lack of proper ventilation, which not only caused a fetid, unpleasant odor, but also contributed to the decay of bedding, personal equipment, and buildings.<sup>11</sup> Similarly at Fort Gibson in 1839, Dr. William L. Wharton, post surgeon, warned the commanding officer, Major Bennett Riley, that sleeping space at the post was at a premium. On the basis of a current misconception that malaria was air-borne, Wharton suggested that new quarters should be erected as soon as possible so that malarial fevers would not be spread in overcrowded barracks.<sup>12</sup> As late as 1856, poor sleeping facilities were reported from the Department of Texas, where Colonel Mansfield noted damp lower bunks and poorly ventilated

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Colonel George Croghan, Report of Inspection, 20 July 1834, Inspection Report Book No. 3, 49ff., Office of the Inspector General.

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Assistant Surgeon W.L. Wharton to Major B. Riley, 24 July 1834, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

barracks. In most instances surgeons and inspectors reported a close correlation between prevailing illness among the troops and damp, foul smelling quarters.<sup>13</sup>

Diet was also an important factor in the overall health problem. The basic rations, procured by the Quartermaster Department, were more or less stable. Salt pork or bacon, dried beans, coffee, sugar, salt, rice, and vinegar were obtained in bulk quantities from wholesale grocers near the respective posts or from contractors who supplied several forts from a central location such as Galena, Illinois, or St. Louis, Missouri.<sup>14</sup> Spoilage of these dry commodities was a constant problem to most commands. The same climatic conditions which deteriorated living quarters worked also on commissary buildings where barrels of flour, beans, pork, and rice were stored. Heavy rains, floods, and general decay sometimes caused barrels of these items to be condemned by survey boards appointed by post councils of administration. When supplies were dwindling, borderline cases undoubtedly passed inspection and were issued to the troops. Such questionable supplies may have been the cause of an outbreak of bowel infections at Fort McKavett, Texas

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<sup>13</sup> Freeman, Report of Inspection, 1853, passim; Mansfield, Report of Inspection, 1856, passim.

<sup>14</sup> Copy of contract of A.S. Bender, 10 January 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

in 1853. The post surgeon, Dr. Samuel W. Crawford, suspected that many of the cases could be attributed to unwholesome food that was frequently served to the troops.

Contracts for fresh meat supplies were awarded locally in most cases. A scarcity of beef, mutton, or buffalo meant high prices, but on the other hand, the quality of meat often depended upon the business ethics of cattlemen and butchers, as well as on the shrewdness and thriftiness of the post quartermaster. As mentioned previously, Sergeant Percival Lowe and his comrades enjoyed quantities of "fresh beef" at Fort Leavenworth in the early 1850's, because the post meat contractor supplied buffalo instead of cattle. Other fresh meat was frequently obtained by the soldiers themselves, more especially the officers, through recreational and military hunting expeditions. The assortment varied according to shooting abilities, season, and geography.<sup>16</sup>

Before the advent of mechanical refrigeration, the danger of the troops being served tainted meat was a serious problem in the southern and southwestern military zones. In 1837 Clifton Wharton, commander at Fort Gibson, directed his butcher in the summer months to kill the cattle the night before beef was to be issued, instead of anticipating the

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<sup>15</sup> Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 1834-37, passim, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West; see also Freeman, Report of Inspection, July, 1853, 75 (old pagination), Records of Army Commands.

<sup>16</sup>

Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 39.

needs of the garrison by three days as was the usual practice.<sup>17</sup> Ice houses were constructed at most posts as integral parts of the physical plants. However, the problem of keeping them filled depended upon the whims of mother nature and the foresight of respective commanding officers. In northern commands where winters were usually very severe, the accumulation of an ice supply for the following summer was a routine matter. For example, Captain Bennett Riley, commanding officer at Fort Leavenworth wrote a very enthusiastic report to General Henry Atkinson concerning the post ice house: "We have got our ice house filled with the best ice I have ever seen in this country; the weather set in late on the first of the month and has remained so ever since, on the 3rd or 4th it was 30 degrees below zero...."<sup>18</sup> When Lieutenant Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock visited Fort Gibson in January, 1842, he was able to observe Colonel R.B. Mason's concern about prospective freezing conditions during the winter. Mason lamented to Hitchcock that for some years there had not been enough ice to fill the ice house, and at that the ice was usually of such poor quality that by summer it was useless.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Major C. Wharton to A.G.O., 7 July 1837, A.G.O., Letters Received, 1837.

<sup>18</sup> Captain B. Riley to General H. Atkinson, 12 January 1834, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>19</sup> Foreman, (ed.), *A Traveller in Indian Territory*, 91.



If army provisions survived the trip from packer to grocer to garrison and storage in the post commissary buildings, there still was danger of contamination before the food was served to the troops. Precautionary measures were taken in most commands to avoid unfortunate results from the preparation of foods. The General Regulations prescribed that company officers were required to inspect the kitchens each day in order to insure cleanliness and careful preparation. It was further required that all bread baked in the post bakery should be "cooked until well done and not eaten until cold." Soup had to be boiled for at least five hours, and all vegetables had to be cooked until they were soft and easily digestible. All brass and copper cooking utensils required a tin lining to avoid giving the food a metallic taste and to prevent possible ptomaine poisoning. Periodic inspections of frontier posts indicated that the regulations were carried out well in most commands. The variety of food may have been rather limited, and it may have been over-cooked, but it was usually non-poisonous.

Other preventative health measures were carried out in relation to dietetic conditions, usually upon recommendations from the post medical officers. The discovery and

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War Department, General Regulations for...1857, par. 111-113, 15; see also Croghan, Report of Inspection 20 July 1834, O.I.G., Inspection Reports Book No. 3, 49; Freeman, Report of Inspection, Fort McIntosh, Texas, 22 July 1853, 66; De Zurko, "A Report and Remarks on Cantonment Leavenworth," 354.

isolation of specific vitamins was not made until 1906 by Sir Frederick Hopkins, but evidence of dietary deficiency was observed by a number of United States army surgeons during the mid-nineteenth century. Dr. Samuel G.I. DeCamp, post surgeon at Fort Marcy, New Mexico, reported to Surgeon General Thomas Lawson that during 1847 scurvy had appeared among the troops in the Texas and New Mexico posts. DeCamp attributed the condition to the incessant use of mutton and bread as dietary staples, and he therefore recommended that fresh beef be issued from time to time. As a further preventative, DeCamp suggested that post gardens be planted wherever possible in order to provide an assortment of fresh<sup>21</sup> vegetables for the soldiers' diet.

Colonel Gustavus Loomis found many cases of scurvy among his troops when he assumed command of Fort Belknap, Texas in 1852. Loomis informed the Adjutant General that anti-scorbutics should be sent immediately to prevent the development of new cases and, at the same time, to help restore the health of his ailing soldiers. Since it was too early in the season to find fresh produce, Loomis suggested that the Quartermaster Department include quantities in the<sup>22</sup> daily ration. Lieutenant Colonel William Freeman reported

<sup>21</sup> William L. Langer, (ed.), An Encyclopedia of World History (Boston, 1948), 552; and Assistant Surgeon S.G.I. DeCamp to General T. Lawson, 14 April 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>22</sup> Colonel G. Loomis to A.G.O., 12 February 1852, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, L.R.

that he found no cases of scurvy during his inspection of Texas posts in 1853. This good record was due in part to a general adherence to the recommendations and practices of Dr. Samuel W. Crawford, post surgeon at Fort McKavett, Texas. Before the development of post gardens at many Texas posts and before the general reinauguration of the extensive military farm system, Dr. Crawford suggested to departmental headquarters that the regularly issued rations should be supplemented with indigenous green vegetables, such as young spring poke and wild lamb lettuce. Later the same year gardens were started so that fresh vegetables were available in abundance for the following season.<sup>23</sup> However, three years later when Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield inspected the same Texas posts, the symptoms of scurvy had reappeared. A series of dry seasons had made gardening impracticable at many Texas posts, consequently upon the recommendation of Surgeon Charles McCormick, anti-scorbutics were again issued<sup>24</sup> to raise the general level of health in the department.

Line and staff officers were charged with the responsibility of providing food, clothing, and shelter for the troops in their respective commands, but the burden of

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<sup>23</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Freeman, Report of Inspection, Fort McKavett, July, 1853, 75.

<sup>24</sup>

Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield, Report of Inspection, Fort McKavett, April, 1856, 16.

sustaining the general health of the troops rested with the Army Medical Department. The Medical Department was organized as a staff department in 1818 and from the very first was headed by a Surgeon General whose policies and directives were carried out by a group of surgeons and assistant surgeons in lower echelons. However, in 1821 when the entire army was reorganized and reduced in size, the medical staff was specifically limited to one surgeon general, eight surgeons, and forty-five assistant surgeons.<sup>25</sup> In effect the reduction meant that fifty-three practicing physicians were available to care for the health of the authorized army of about six thousand officers and men, or one doctor for every one hundred and sixteen men.<sup>26</sup>

Private physicians were hired occasionally to supplement the services of military surgeons. The former group was paid either on a monthly or annual contract basis for service to a particular garrison or perhaps to care for a body of troops who were traveling from one location to another. In other cases, private physicians were able to submit claims to the War Department for services to soldiers who may have become ill while on leave or on official duties

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Ralph C. Williams, The United States Public Health Service 1789-1950 (Washington, 1951), 39f.

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Upton, Military Policy of the United States, 151.

such as recruiting service, away from army medical facilities. In 1827, 1828, and 1829 claims for all such medical services averaged eleven thousand dollars a year, most of which was expended at frontier posts.<sup>27</sup> Despite an increase in the number of surgeons on the frontier between 1830 and 1860, the system of contracting with civilian physicians continued as the number of western posts increased.

Surgeon Generals Joseph Lovell and Thomas Lawson, successively, conducted a crusade, paralleling the chaplain movement, to increase the size of the medical corps and raise the pay, standards, and working conditions of military surgeons. In 1829 Surgeon General Lovell petitioned Senator Thomas Hart Benton, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, for his support in promoting legislation to secure a salary increase of ten dollars a month for surgeons and five dollars a month for assistant surgeons. In effect Lovell hoped to obtain the respective ranks of captain and first lieutenant for these men. Lovell further advocated the practice of calling an army medical board into session from time to time to examine prospective candidates for the medical corps. He observed that well qualified men were always needed, and especially at remote western posts where frequent illness and large station complements made the

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<sup>27</sup>

American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 443f.

duties of a single attending surgeon very exacting.

Two years passed without any impression having been made on successive economy-minded Congresses. In 1831, Lewis Cass, Secretary of War under Andrew Jackson, reechoed Lovell's plea for increases in the size and pay of the medical department. Cass reported that there were only fifty-three surgeons available to serve the sixty-four permanent and temporary military stations in the country. Moreover, Cass observed, it was unlikely that additional surgeons could be recruited inasmuch as army remuneration was inadequate and that there was little opportunity for advancement. Secretary Cass' report was supported by petitions from officers of the Third and Seventh Infantry Regiments which were stationed at various posts in the central zone of the Western Military Division. These officers had experienced the scarcity of adequate medical facilities and expressed the hope that Congress would act in such a way as to make the army medical service more appealing to young physicians and at the same time reward contemporary army surgeons for their years of loyal service and experience.

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28

Ibid., IV, 65ff.

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Ibid., IV, 712.

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Ibid., IV, 849.

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These efforts finally bore fruit in 1834 when Congress passed an act to increase the pay of army surgeons and to establish a medical examining board. It would be the function of the latter to certify new candidates and to examine those assistant surgeons who wished to be considered for promotion to surgeon. Once a physician had received the appointment of assistant surgeon, five years' military experience -- in lieu of a second examination -- would qualify a candidate for a recommendation for promotion. The actual promotion depended to a greater extent upon a vacancy in the ranks of the limited number of surgeons. The act of 1834 provided that surgeons would be awarded the pay and emoluments of a major, while an assistant surgeon with five or more years' service would be awarded the pay and allowances of a captain, and an assistant surgeon with less than five years' duty would receive the pay and allowances of a first lieutenant. Surgeons and assistant surgeons with ten or more years' service received the slight additional compensation of double rations per day, which was considerably advantageous to family men. At the same time the act recognized the need for providing surgeons with a certain measure of legal immunity, as a protection for the sick and wounded

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Harvey E. Brown, (comp.), The Medical Department of the United States Army from 1775 to 1873 (Washington, 1873), 139f.

rather than for the doctors themselves. War Department Order No. 13, 2 April 1830, was resurrected so that no surgeon could be held in arrest or confinement until his court martial had actually assembled or until he had been relieved of his duties by another physician.<sup>32</sup>

Actual conditions at western military posts changed little during the two years immediately following the passage of the latter act. In 1836 the unequal distribution of surgeons and troops under their care continued to be a major concern. For example, Fort Winnebago, Wisconsin Territory, housed one hundred and thirteen officers and men, who were treated by Surgeon Lyman Foote, while Fort Snelling with its two hundred and thirty-three men was served by Assistant Surgeon Nathan S. Jarvis. Similarly, Fort Leavenworth, with three hundred and twenty officers and men had the services of two surgeons, while Fort Gibson with a roster of only one hundred and thirty-two boasted three doctors, probably because the latter post was headquarters for the Western Division and the First Dragoon Regiment.<sup>33</sup> The condition of inequality continued until the outbreak of the Civil War, even though the strength of the medical corps was twice increased during Surgeon General Thomas Lawson's term of office, 1838

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Ibid., 141.

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American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 35f; and Ibid., VI, 806f.



to 1861.<sup>34</sup>

A surgeon's education varied considerably during the nineteenth century. Most army doctors of the 1820's and 1830's received their training by apprenticeship and practice before they received military appointments. A number of men served as hospital stewards prior to appointments, after the War of 1812, as assistant surgeons. One example is John Marsh, a school teacher at Fort Snelling in the 1820's, who pursued a course of medical studies under the direction of Surgeon Edward Purcell. Unfortunately for him, the old doctor died before he was able to sign a certificate of Marsh's training and competence. Marsh later became a self-styled doctor in California on the basis of the work he had done with Purcell, but he never managed to secure a military appointment.<sup>35</sup>

Dr. Charles Sutherland, a former hospital steward, was hired on a monthly basis to provide medical services for troops at Fort Towson in 1847. Sutherland became the center of a bitter dispute involving professional competence, wherein Major George Andrews, commanding officer at Fort Washita, labeled the doctor "wholly incapable and unworthy... with...no professional knowledge or character for such a position." Andrews alleged that Sutherland was given the

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<sup>34</sup> Williams, The United States Public Health Service, 66.

<sup>35</sup> Lyman, John Marsh, Pioneer, 60ff.

appointment at Fort Towson in order to enable him to repay gambling debts which he had incurred while gambling with the Negro servants of several post officers.<sup>36</sup> Andrews initiated an order through departmental headquarters calling for Sutherland's dismissal, but the doctor's commanding officer so ably defended him with a series of recommendations, including one from Sutherland's medical sponsor, a Dr. Pugsley, that the order was rescinded. It was something of double victory inasmuch as Dr. Sutherland could not have been replaced at the ridiculous sum of twenty dollars a month, a factor which far outweighed testimonials of ability and charges of mal-practice.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, there were many trained physicians like Dr. Rodney Glisan who received his M.D. degree from the University of Maryland, who practiced almost two years in Baltimore, and who passed an examination before an army medical board before he received his appointment of Assistant Surgeon in 1850. The examination, Glisan observed, was rather difficult and far different from the methods by which appointments had been granted as political rewards during the preceding decade.<sup>38</sup>

An important part of every military post, yet usually

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<sup>36</sup>

Major G. Andrews to Lieutenant F.F. Flint, 26 April 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>37</sup>

Lieutenant R. W. Foote to Lieutenant F.F. Flint, 15 May 1847, Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 1f.

isolated from it, was the hospital. The hospital at Fort Gibson, for example, was situated some distance from the main buildings on a knoll which overlooked the post cemetery.<sup>39</sup> While visiting the latter post in 1834, George Catlin, the American artist, was stricken with a type of summer ailment which was usually classified as a "billious fever." He wrote of the grim experience of lying ill in his hospital bed and being able to view the frequent, daily burials in the post cemetery.<sup>40</sup> The post hospital at Fort Arbuckle was located in a similar position, at some distance from the garrison proper. Dr. Rodney Glisan was present during the construction of the fort and noted the advantageous position of "his hospital" to the rear of the commissary and quartermaster supply sheds at the southeast corner<sup>41</sup> of the garrison quadrangle.

The physical dimensions of military hospitals varied according to the function and size of particular posts. Fort Arbuckle, for example, was usually garrisoned by no more than one hundred men, consequently, the hospital was a low, one story building divided into four compartments. One room was used as a dispensary for sick calls and minor medical treatments, while two adjacent rooms served as wards for bed

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Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, 166.

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Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 80.

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Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 81.

cases. Attached to the latter rooms was a small ell where the hospital stewards lived. The fourth main room served as a kitchen and mess area.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Fort Leavenworth had a normal station complement of two to three hundred men and could maintain a large hospital. The thirty-six by sixty-four foot unit was built of wood and brick and consisted of three floors including the cellar where the kitchens were located. The two upper floors were divided into four rooms each, including wards, dispensary rooms, and offices. The average room, twenty by eighteen feet, was entered from a hall at either end of the building or from a covered piazza<sup>43</sup> which extended along the front of the building.

Surgeons and assistant surgeons were aided by enlisted men who had volunteered for hospital duty, for which they received extra pay. At garrisons housing one to five companies hospital stewards were paid fifteen cents per day, while at larger posts they could receive as much as twenty-five cents. While such voluntary assistance existed during times of emergency, the regular enlistment of hospital stewards in the medical department was not introduced until the latter part of Surgeon General Lawson's term, in the 1850's.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup>

Ibid., 82.

<sup>43</sup>

DeZurko, "A Report and Remarks on Cantonment Leavenworth," 352.

<sup>44</sup>

Brown, The Medical Department of the United States Army, 149.

One unique feature of the army medical service was the use of ambulances some years before their acceptance and common utilization by civilian hospitals. Numerous experiments with two or four wheeled wagons were made in the field and on the frontier, so that by the outbreak of the Civil War an organized system of transporting sick and wounded had been developed.<sup>45</sup>

Most editions of the General Regulations included advice and orders for the maintenance of personal cleanliness and health. A humorous situation arose at Fort Leavenworth in 1831 when Lieutenant Philip St. George Cooke was instructed by the commanding officer to comply with the General Regulations regarding moustaches, by removing his immediately. Cooke appealed rather indignantly to General McComb that he be allowed to retain his moustache, which he alleged was as legal as side whiskers, inasmuch as he had an overly conspicuous upper lip. Lieutenant Cooke was summarily informed that moustaches would not be worn under any circumstances!<sup>46</sup> As a matter of record, the regulations were not changed in this respect until 1847, when cavalry officers were excepted and were allowed to wear moustaches, possibly

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<sup>45</sup> Williams, The United States Public Health Service, 62f; 66; see also Post Journal, Fort Gibson, 31 December 1851, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>46</sup> Lieutenant P. Cooke to A.G.O., 5 August 1831, A.G.O. Letters Received.

as dust collectors. Also in 1847, the strict military policy of wearing short side whiskers and "closely cropped" hair was established.<sup>47</sup> There is some doubt, however, as to the exact shortness of the nineteenth century "crew cut." In 1848, there is a record of Captain W.S. Ketchum's having sent three dollars by special messenger to Dr. Joseph Bailey at Fort Smith, Arkansas for some of the latter's home brewed hair tonic.<sup>48</sup> Apparently the hair and whisker controversy was set aside in the 1850's by the dictates of style. The 1857 edition of the General Regulations provided that the hair should be worn "short" rather than cropped and beards kept neatly trimmed.<sup>49</sup> Other paragraphs of the General Regulations pertained specifically to bathing -- viz: "where conveniences for bathing are to be had, the men should bathe at least once a week. The feet are to be washed twice a week."<sup>50</sup>

Notable among the steps in preventative medicine during this period before the Civil War was the vaccination of troops against the ravages of smallpox. It is difficult

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<sup>47</sup>

War Department, General Regulations...1847, 215.

<sup>48</sup>

Captain W.S. Ketchum to Lieutenant F.F. Flint, 17 October 1848, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>49</sup>

War Department, General Regulations for...1857, 13.

<sup>50</sup>

War Department, General Regulations for...1841, 15.

to ascertain how wide-spread this practice was since detailed individual health records were not kept, except when a soldier was hospitalized. By the middle of the nineteenth century smallpox was fairly in the United States. However, particular care was taken along the northern border where immigration was unrestricted to insure that the disease was not spread by Indians and traders crossing the border from Canada. Dr. William Beaumont, Assistant Surgeon at Fort Howard in the late 1820's, saw such a danger to the men in his command. He therefore requested the Surgeon General's Office to send several fresh batches of live virus from Washington before the winter of 1827-28 closed water navigation to Fort Howard, near Green Bay, Michigan Territory. Successful inoculation did not occur immediately, for it was necessary for Surgeon General Joseph Lovell to send a new batch of virus late in November, 1827 with specific directions as to its application and storage.<sup>51</sup>

There were many theories regarding the incidence of illness and the high death rate at frontier posts. For example, many men died during the first winter at Fort Atkinson, Iowa in the early 1820's because their barracks were not yet constructed. Health gradually improved when medical care became available, barracks were aired frequently, and the

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<sup>51</sup> Myer, Life and Letters of Dr. William Beaumont, 131f.

hog pens were moved some distance from the camp.<sup>52</sup> Cases of intermittent fever at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas were the chief causes for hospitalization in 1829. Secretary of War Peter B. Porter attributed the situation to the fact that rich bottom lands adjacent to the fort bred illness, although the fort itself was on high ground. "The luxuriant vegetation which covers the banks of our western rivers where troops are stationed, and which annually dies and rots," he reported to Congress in 1830, "produces the most fatal diseases; and this evil can be remedied only by the introduction of population and herds to destroy and consume this excess of vegetation."<sup>53</sup> In 1833 Charles Hoffman, editor of the New York American, observed these same conditions as he traveled through the West. He suggested that perhaps health was endangered when decomposed vegetable matter was acted upon by the strong rays of the summer sun.<sup>54</sup>

The correlation between environment and health was seen at Fort Gibson by a number of observers during the 1830's and 1840's. The indomitable Sam Houston, while trading in the vicinity of the post in 1832, was stricken with a fever

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<sup>52</sup>

Wesley, "Life at a Frontier Post," 206f.

<sup>53</sup>

De Zurko, "A Report and Remarks on Cantonment Leavenworth," 354; see also American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 2.

<sup>54</sup>

Hoffman, A Winter in the West, cited in Clark, The West in American History, 382.



which almost proved fatal. The stagnant low lands of the Arkansas Valley were allegedly the breeding grounds for such maladies.<sup>55</sup> George Catlin, an American artist, visited the post during the same period and noted that one-third of the four-hundred-and-fifty patrol force died during the fever period in the summer of 1834. Catlin attributed the great number of deaths to the unprecedented drought and extreme heat and to the government policy of transferring troops from the extreme North to the South during the hottest months of the year. A bitter lesson, Catlin thought, had been learned which should be profitable in the future.<sup>56</sup>

The changes in season brought little relief to Fort Gibson commands. During the winter of 1846-47, an unusually large number of soldiers were incapacitated by illness. The most common complaint was a remittent fever, fatal to some, and was allegedly caused by the troops' being exposed to severe temperature changes within a short period of time. Dr. Richard H. Coolidge, the post surgeon, saw the devastating effects of illness on the efficiency of the command and suggested that drills be suspended, at least on the coldest days. In order to protect the health of men who were fit for duty, he further recommended that all sentinels be re-

<sup>55</sup> Marquis James, The Raven, A Biography of Sam Houston (New York, 1929), 117f.

<sup>56</sup> Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 80f.

lieved every hour instead of every two hours.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, Lieutenant Colonel Dixon S. Miles, commander at Fort Washita some two hundred miles southwest of Fort Gibson looked forward to cooler weather in September, 1850 after his troops had suffered through temperatures of 107°F. during the latter part of August. Miles hoped that the health of his soldiers would improve with cooler weather, although he anticipated at least twenty cases of chronic<sup>58</sup> ache during the winter months. Dr. Rodney Glisan, post surgeon at Fort Washita four years later, had an altogether different view of the local climate. He opined that the climate was too enervating for the best of health and that the humidity and extreme temperature variations were the chief factors in accounting for frequent illnesses.<sup>59</sup>

The climate and geography of the Southwest varied so that alternately it was damned and praised. Dragoon sergeant James Bennett was billeted at Albuquerque, New Mexico in June, 1852, when he suffered from the incessant heat under a thin canvas tent and from the myriad of mosquitoes.<sup>60</sup> The following year Dr. Caleb Kennerly, a young physician en

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<sup>57</sup> Assistant Surgeon R.H. Coolidge to Lieutenant R.W. Kirkham, 18 January 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>58</sup> Lieutenant Colonel D.S. Miles to Major F.N. Page, 1 September 1850, Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 139.

<sup>60</sup> ~~Brooks and Reeve, (eds.), Forts and Forays, 38.~~

route to California, stopped for two weeks at Fort Inge, Texas. There, in addition to inactivity, Dr. Kennerly complained of the intolerable heat and the filthy, fly-ridden atmosphere, which he found were the common denominators in that area during the summer months.<sup>61</sup> In contrast General Edmund P. Gaines urged General Henry Atkinson to join him and Mrs. Gaines in retiring to the Southwest, or more accurately, the Old Southwest. Gaines reported to Atkinson from Fort Jesup, Louisiana in June, 1836 that the climate thereabouts, and in East Texas, was excellent. Not only was there a good water supply, but also ideal moderate weather, warm days, and cool nights, but no mosquitoes. The General had cause to regret his statement, for within six months Mrs. Gaines contracted a malarial fever and died.<sup>62</sup>

Drill during hot weather was seen by some to have been as enervating as in cold weather. Surgeon William Wharton advised Major Bennett Riley, commander at Fort Gibson in 1839, that pre-breakfast drill should be suspended especially in hot weather on account of the detrimental effects to the general health of the command.<sup>63</sup> In 1845 at Fort Gibson,

<sup>61</sup> Diary of a Journey to California, 1853-54, MS. in Caleb Burwell Rowan Kennerly Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

<sup>62</sup> General E. P. Gaines to General H. Atkinson, 28 June 1836, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received; see also The Army and Navy Chronicle, December 8, 1836.

<sup>63</sup> Assistant Surgeon W.L. Wharton to Major B. Riley, 24 July 1839, ~~Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.~~

the combination of hot weather and cold water was attributed to be the cause of two deaths. Within the space of a few hours a sergeant died after having commanded a burial party for another soldier. Both deaths were attributed to their drinking copious quantities of cold water immediately after several hours of strenuous drill during the hottest part of the day.<sup>64</sup>

Additional evidence is available to show both the correlation between climate and health and also the negative qualities of public health administration at military posts. Dr. Samuel Crawford reported from Fort McKavett, Texas in 1853 that bowel infections had increased during the previous year as a result of exposure of the troops to drafts in cold, damp weather and especially damp, night air after they had become overheated from brisk exercise. However, Dr. Crawford admitted that a number of cases of gastro-intestinal upset were undoubtedly caused by unwholesome food that was being served in one or two messes.<sup>65</sup> At Ringgold Barracks, Texas during the same year the most common complaints were diarrhea, dysentery, and intermittent fever. Scurvy was notably absent, however, on account of the use of fresh vegetables in the

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The Cherokee Advocate, July 31, 1845.

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Dr. S. Crawford cited by Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Freeman, Report of Inspection, Ninth Military Department, 1853, Fort McKavett, 75. (old pagination.)

daily diet.<sup>66</sup> When most regular army troops evacuated Fort Gibson in 1845-46 to take part in the Mexican campaigns, the post was occupied by Missouri volunteers. The introduction of new elements into a static community upset the existing ecological balance. Death and widespread sickness were reported as results of an epidemic of measles. In addition, as many as twenty cases of congestive fever, probably pneumonia, were admitted to the hospital in one day.<sup>67</sup>

Ague and intermittent fever plagued troops at Fort Crawford from the outset. In 1830, when the fort was being reconstructed and repaired, Colonel Willoughby Morgan, the commanding officer, appealed to General Henry Atkinson for new forces to replace civilian workers and soldiers who had become incapacitated. Morgan emphasized the need for soldiers especially, inasmuch as he rarely had enough men who were physically able to perform guard duty at regular intervals.<sup>68</sup> Again in 1846 the troops at Fort Crawford were incapacitated by disease. Captain William Knowlton reported to Colonel William Davenport, commander of the Third Military Department, that most members of the staff and command had

<sup>66</sup>

Ibid., 45.

<sup>67</sup>

The Cherokee Advocate, September 11, 1845, and September 17, 1846.

<sup>68</sup>

Colonel W. Morgan to General H. Atkinson, 21 August 1830, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

been ill with a bilious fever, in consequence of which all work had practically ceased. The disease was so wide spread that almost the entire population of Prairie Du Chien was likewise affected.<sup>69</sup> In 1834, Charles Murray, a British geologist, visited Fort Leavenworth where he observed the results of an epidemic of ague and fever. Most of the inhabitants and the surrounding houses had become ashen-faced and sunken-eyed from the effects of the debilitating diseases.<sup>70</sup>

Without doubt Asiatic cholera was the most devastating and awesome of all diseases which appeared at even the most isolated frontier posts. During the years 1832-34 a number of serious outbreaks of the pestilence were reported in the West. The spread of the disease was attributed to the unusually heavy military and civilian traffic on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers during those years.<sup>71</sup> Troops stationed at Fort Armstrong, Illinois in 1833-34 after the Black Hawk War were caught at a vital point on the Mississippi River and were exposed to the ravages of the disease. Since no cure was known then, many sought relief and comfort in alcohol. But to no avail, the death list increased day by

<sup>69</sup>  
Captain W. Knowlton to Colonel W. Davenport, 17 September 1846, Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>  
Murray, Travels in North America, II, 74f.

<sup>71</sup>  
Williams, The United States Public Health Service, 71.

day. The alcohol merely made the inevitable less painful.<sup>72</sup>  
 This disease, like all others, recognized neither rank nor age. In 1849 an epidemic of cholera coincided with a series of flash floods at San Antonio, Texas and other posts to the north. General William J. Worth, who was in command of the area, was fatally stricken with the disease while he was reporting the extent of the flood damage to the Adjutant General's Office.<sup>73</sup>

By 1850 neither a cure nor the premonitory symptoms of the disease were known. James Bennett, a newly enlisted recruit, reported a serious outbreak of cholera at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri shortly after his arrival in July, 1850. Roll call on July 20 indicated that more than one hundred men had died or had deserted in fear of the disease since the regiment had departed from New York. Bennett and a number of companions later traveled to Fort Leavenworth by steamer, during which journey panic and desertion continued to mount as new cases of cholera were reported daily. The record remained unbroken even after their arrival at Fort Leavenworth. Every day Bennett witnessed four or five blanket-wrapped corpses being thrown into a common grave.

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Cooke, Scenes and Adventures in the Army, 193ff.

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Major G. Deas to A.G.O., 7 May 1849, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received; see also Knight, Fort Worth, 12-14.

Salvation and escape came for Bennett when he was transferred soon afterwards to a dragoon company in Santa Fe, New Mexico. <sup>74</sup>

The year 1855 brought a renewal of disease and terror to Kansas, particularly to Fort Riley situated on the Salmon River branch of the Missouri. Traffic on the rivers had increased as larger numbers of immigrants moved into the area after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. Grim and terrible scenes descended upon Fort Riley. Death struck officers, soldiers, civilian workers, women, and children alike. The post surgeon hastened for help to a fort less exposed to contagion, leaving the chaplain, Reverend David Clarkson, to carry the easing of the suffering. <sup>75</sup> Horror was matched only by courage. While the chaplain prayed and buried the dead, Percival Lowe, a civilian carpenter foreman and formerly a dragoon sergeant, aided in suppressing a mutiny of civilian workers who looted and reveled when all semblance of military discipline was erased by the outbreak. <sup>76</sup> A similar situation was reported to have occurred at Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1847, when the Second Regiment of Mounted Volunteers was attempting to erect Fort Marcy. General S.W.

<sup>74</sup> Brooks and Reeve, (eds.), Forts and Forays, 10f; see also Pelzer, Marches of the Dragoons in the Mississippi Valley, 170.

<sup>75</sup> Chaplain D. Clarkson to General S. Cooper, 1 August 1855, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>76</sup> Lowe, Five Years a Dragoon, 190f.



Kearny had captured the city in August, 1846 without firing a shot. He then left Major Edwin V. Sumner in command in October, 1846 in order to march a force to California to aid in the capture of that territory from Mexico. Captain Amos F. Garrison confidentially reported to Major Richard B. Lee at St. Louis that discipline under Sumner had broken down on account of the latter's weakness, and that the volunteer troops were completely out of hand in the face of impending death from disease. Garrison also reported that two-thirds of the Second Regiment had died and were buried on an adjacent hill. The living spent their time playing cards, drinking, or carrying on with the local women.<sup>77</sup>

In some instances frontier army posts were more than inns for the traveler; they frequently were havens for the sick and the aged. Many fever-wracked pioneers on their way to Oregon stopped for comfort and care at the Fort Kearny hospital in 1852. None was ever refused help on account of penury, because all such care was a part of the government's program of aid for emigrants.<sup>78</sup> Fort Laramie's post hospital was usually filled with soldiers and pioneers alike; many of the latter, unfortunately, transmitted cholera to the troops, who previously had escaped the disease. The early

<sup>77</sup> Captain W. Garrison to Major R.B. Lee, 8 April 1847, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received; see also Ganoë, The History of the United States Army, 209ff.

<sup>78</sup> Barry, "Overland to the Gold Fields of California in 1852," 243.

1850's were unusually grim years at most Oregon Trail posts on account of serious illnesses.<sup>79</sup>

Accidents also took a heavy toll at frontier posts. Inspector General James Duncan observed during his inspection of Fort Smith, Arkansas in 1849 that one-quarter of the command was incapacitated. The medical department under Dr. Joseph Bailey was functioning well enough, but many men had been seriously injured or burned when several of the post buildings were destroyed by fire on April 20, 1849.<sup>80</sup> Army surgeons treated broken limbs, torn muscles, and axe wounds as matters of daily routine. Such accidents could be expected, especially when untrained recruits were sent to cut wood for fuel and building materials. The most demoralizing type of incident was the accidental discharge of firearms, resulting in the killing or wounding of persons without the compensation of glory or a citation for bravery. For example, Captain Burdett A. Terrett was riding about Fort Scott, Kansas in April, 1845 when suddenly a small dog started snapping at his horse's heels. To prevent being thrown, Terrett attempted to frighten the dog by firing a pistol shot over the animal's head. The dog barked, the horse shied, the pistol discharged prematurely, and Terrett

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<sup>79</sup>  
Ibid., 251; see also Hafen and Young, Fort Laramie, 148f.

<sup>80</sup>  
Colonel James Duncan, Report of Inspection of Fort Smith, 23 April 1849, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West; see also Foreman, Marcy and the Gold Seekers, 132.

fell dead from his horse.<sup>81</sup> A similar tragedy occurred at Fort Terrett, Texas, eight years later when one evening in March, 1853 Lieutenant Frederick J. Denman sat cleaning his pistol. The weapon suddenly and accidentally discharged and fatally wounded Denman, who died within twenty-four hours.<sup>82</sup>

Burial was not usually a military health problem and generally each body had an individual resting place in a conveniently located cemetery. However, when cholera struck Fort Leavenworth in 1850, the emergency practice of burying the dead in a common grave presented a serious health problem. Not only were all the infected bodies massed together in one pile, but also successive burial parties were exposed as each new body was added. A similar problem of exposure was experienced at posts along the Rio Grande River in 1856. Colonel Joseph K.F. Mansfield inspected a number of river forts and observed that no lumber was available for coffins. He cited an instance wherein an officer was laid to rest in a makeshift casket created from discarded gun crates and old bacon boxes. For reasons of health, if not for military dignity, Mansfield recommended that an adequate supply of lumber be procured for all Texas posts.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup>

The Arkansas Intelligencer, April 5, 1845.

<sup>82</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel N. Bainbridge to Assistant Adjutant General, 2 March 1853, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>83</sup>

Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield, Report of Inspection, 1856-  
copy of letter Mansfield to Colonel A.S. Johnston, 18 August,  
1856.

Alcoholism as a special military health problem was recognized as early as the American Revolution by Dr. Benjamin Rush, father of the temperance movement. Drinking per se and its consequences prompted Rush to counsel soldiers to be moderate in their drinking for their own sakes. Later military and medical leaders advocated a stricter program of total abstinence and prohibition. In 1829 Secretary of War Peter B. Porter devoted a considerable portion of his annual report to Congress to the matter of drinking in the army. In a general survey of the problem, Porter suggested that the habitual use of liquor, even in moderate quantities, was not favorable to a person's health; however, Porter amended this view to except cases wherein persons who engaged in strenuous occupations could drink a gill or less of whiskey per day without serious damage to health. Porter also recognized an additional personal problem which few nineteenth century prohibitionists faced squarely: the sudden and total abandonment of liquor by the hardened alcoholic produced a state of mind and health almost as serious as alcoholism itself. Drinking hard liquor in quantities was a national problem and was very common among the laboring class from which the rank and file recruit came. Porter believed that the cause of intemperance in the army stemmed not from the moderate daily liquor ration but from the illegal procurement of additional quantities by those who had become

addicted to its use.<sup>84</sup>

The solution was not as easily reached as the recognition that such a problem existed. Porter suggested that a monetary reward be given to those who abstained, while drunk soldiers and their civilian suppliers should be punished to the full extent of the law. In concluding his report to the House of Representatives, the Secretary cautioned against discriminating against the moderate drinker, who caused little or no trouble, by attempting to enforce strict prohibitory regulations. Likewise, Porter felt that the dignity of the individual should be maintained with the inauguration of a purely voluntary temperance program.<sup>85</sup>

A number of military leaders also expressed similar opinions and contributed their views through the Secretary's Report. General in Chief, Alexander McComb echoes Porter's concern about intemperance in the army, and stressed the consequent factors of disease and desertion. McComb sought to shift the burden of control to the post sutlers, by suggesting that the daily liquor ration be discontinued and that the sutlers be allowed to sell limited quantities to the soldiers during their off-duty hours. Surgeon General Joseph Lovell, on the other hand, disagreed and thought that the fault lay neither with the daily liquor ration nor with

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<sup>84</sup>

American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 83.

<sup>85</sup>

Ibid., 85.

the daily liquor ration nor with the sutler, but rather with the current practices of recruiting officers. Lovell scored the laxity of recruiting officers and examining surgeons, who admitted known drunkards into the army merely to fill a quota and collect a bounty. Colonel George Gibson, Commissary General of Subsistence, saw no harm, "medically or morally," to the issuance of liquor with the daily food ration. However, he did suggest that state and territorial laws concerning liquor should be more strictly enforced so that soldiers could not obtain whiskey through illegal means from indigent peddlers.<sup>86</sup>

Sufficient specific evidence was available to convince most Congressmen that alcoholism was a serious problem to military leaders. A survey of the sutler's accounts of Company "G," Second Regiment of Artillery stationed at Fort Pike, Louisiana in 1828 indicates that soldier indebtedness varied from two to fifteen dollars a month and that most expenditures were made for gin, brandy, whiskey, and beer.<sup>87</sup> Contrarily, Colonel George Croghan examined the sutler's accounts at Fort Leavenworth in 1829 and found that one entire company had been abstaining from the purchase of liquor. The post's other three companies, however, were not "on the wagon"

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<sup>86</sup>

Ibid., 84ff.

<sup>87</sup>

Sutler's Book, No. 164, 1827-28, passim, Records of Army Commands.

and constantly supplied guard house material and candidates  
88  
for moonlight promenades with loaded knapsacks.

Handling whiskey dealers was always a difficult matter. Colonel Zachary Taylor, commander at Fort Crawford in 1829, experienced trouble with drunkenness in his command which was in the process of rebuilding the post. In a letter to Quartermaster General Thomas S. Jesup, Taylor lamented that not only was every other house at nearby Prairie du Chien a whiskey shop, but also that the rank and file of the army was composed of hardened alcoholics. Taylor concluded his letter with the wish that the post had been rebuilt on the west side of the Mississippi River on Indian lands, where the army could expect aid from federal laws and courts  
89  
in excluding and prosecuting whiskey dealers. Other commanders felt the same problem. Frequently orders were issued to patrol leaders who operated in the vicinity of Fort Gibson in the 1830's to destroy stills and stores of illegal liquor. Captain James H. Gale, commander of Fort Snelling in 1830, believed that local Indians were exerting a bad influence upon his troops and, in consequence, issued an order banning all Indians from the post. Gale blamed Major Lawrence Taliaferro, Indian Agent and American Fur Company

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De Zurko, "A Report and Remarks on Cantonment Leavenworth," 354.

89

Colonel Z. Taylor to General T. Jesup, 15 December 1829, MS. in Taylor Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

representative, for the state of affairs. Taliaferro, however, made it clear that he would accept none of the responsibility and that in his opinion Gale's lack of discipline among the troops made the enforcement of Indian policies almost impossible.<sup>90</sup>

In 1830 Congress again considered the matter of alcoholism in the army. Again there was a difference of opinion among military leaders as to the best method of approach. In March, 1830 Major William Davenport wrote to the Adjutant General from Jefferson Barracks, that the daily liquor ration should be retained. Alcoholism might better be controlled, he thought, by prohibiting its sale in the sutler's shop, for "a man in the habit of drinking a dram every morning soon wants more, and in a short time he is a confirmed drunkard."<sup>91</sup> Major Stephen W. Kearny, a recognized disciplinarian, voiced another view. In a letter to the Adjutant General, Colonel Roger Jones, in regard to the advisability of erecting an army hospital for chronic illnesses, he indicated that such a hospital would be unnecessary if alcoholism were controlled. The Major had a double program in mind for such control -- stoppage of the liquor ration and restoration of corporal punishment, especially for drunkenness. In lieu

<sup>90</sup> Neill, "Occurrences in and around Fort Snelling," 123; see also Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 218; Register of Letters Sent, Fort Gibson, 1837-46, passim, Records of Army Commands.

<sup>91</sup> Major W. Davenport to Colonel S. Cooper, 8 March 1830, A.G.O., Letters Received.



of the whiskey portion of the daily ration, Kearny advocated the issuance of extra coffee and brown sugar, and in lieu of the current practice of sentencing drunkards to repentance in the guard house, he suggested flogging and/or branding with the letter "D."<sup>92</sup>

Meanwhile, the House Committee on Military Affairs was making a study of the entire situation and had come to agree with military leaders that intemperance could be ascribed as the major cause of desertion, insubordination, and disease in the army. The Committee recommended that both the daily liquor ration and the sutler's liquor supply be discontinued. In place of the liquor ration, the Committee suggested that a cash payment be made. Colonel George Gibson, Commissary General of Subsistence, submitted a plan calling for the issuance of extra coffee and sugar which, for every 6,000 men, would increase the War Department budget by \$21,900.<sup>93</sup> A compromise resulted in 1831 with the issuance of War Department General Order 72 in which sufficient allowance was made for the rights of the individual and for the authority of commanding officers. The daily liquor ration was discontinued, and extra rations of coffee and sugar

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<sup>92</sup> Major S. W. Kearny to Colonel R. Jones, 8 March 1830, A.G.O., Letters Received.

<sup>93</sup> American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 275; see also Watson, "Congressional Attitudes Toward Military Preparedness, 1829-1835," 618f.

were issued instead. However, with written permission from a commanding officer, a soldier could purchase up to two gills of liquor per day from the sutler. In this way commanding officers could allow certain liberties for the moderate drinker and at the same time, through the post council of administration, control the hours when liquor could be sold.

As might be expected, no abrupt changes occurred. Enforcement and interpretation of any regulation depended upon the strength and character of the administrator. In one instance, General Mathew Arbuckle acted with determination and forcefulness. The General found his quartermaster at Fort Gibson, Lieutenant Thomas Johnson, drunk and absent from the post during duty hours without permission. Captain Davis Perkins was sent to apprehend Johnson, who was placed under arrest and confined to his quarters, while Perkins assumed the duties of post quartermaster. Arbuckle reprimanded Johnson severely and explained that drunkenness on the part of any man charged with the responsibility of public funds and property would not be tolerated. In a letter to Quartermaster General Thomas S. Jesup, Arbuckle recommended that Johnson be relieved of his duties permanently and reassigned elsewhere. Within a week Johnson broke arrest, continued

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Colonel W. Morgan to Colonel R. Jones, 16 June 1831, A.G.O., Letters Received.

his drinking, and ended his career by gambling with public funds at Little Rock, Arkansas.<sup>95</sup> An equally firm stand was taken by Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Vose in special instructions to Captain Benjamin L. E. Bonneville, when the latter and his Dragoon company joined Vose's command at Fort Towson in 1838. Vose instructed Bonneville to warn his men that none under the influence of liquor would be tolerated to wander about the post. If a man were not on duty and were found drunk, he would be confined to the guard house until he became sober. If a man were found drunk while on duty, he would stand an immediate court martial, which would probably sentence a man to imprisonment, to forfeiture of pay, and possibly to some physical punishment.<sup>96</sup>

In 1832 the General Regulations regarding sutlers were amended so that no liquor could be dispensed to soldiers at any military post. Exceptions to the rule provided that spirituous liquors might be kept for hospital use and for compensating men who had worked at hard physical labor.<sup>97</sup> The wisdom of the regulation seemed dubious over a period of years. Certain soldiers were determined to taste the

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General M. Arbuckle to Captain D. Perkins, 10 November 1834; Arbuckle to Lieutenant T. Johnson, 10 November 1834; Arbuckle to General T. Jesup, 11 November 1834, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

96

Lieutenant Colonel J. Vose to Captain B. L. E. Bonneville, 10 March 1838, Ibid.

97

American State Papers, Military Affairs, V, 20.

forbidden fruit whether prompted by force of habit or by general curiosity and rebelliousness. Musician Harry Watkins, who became an actor after a brief military career, was only fifteen years old when he was stationed at Fort Snelling between 1839 and 1842. Mingling with a group of seasoned drinkers, Watkins first tasted whiskey in order "to be a man." He would often volunteer to scale the wall to fetch quantities of "villainous firewater" from a nearby illegal distillery. The punishment of such acts as Watkins performed was thought to be as severe as an inquisition -- walking around the parade ground for two hour periods loaded down with a <sup>98</sup>sixty pound knapsack.

Major Clifton Wharton, commander of Fort Leavenworth in 1845, requested the assistance of the commander of the Western Division in having the District Attorney of Missouri evict one Alexander Ross, a whiskey dealer who was operating a still near the military reservation. Wharton indicated that Ross' presence directly affected discipline, morale, and health in his command. Not only were a number of men constantly drunk, but many were selling winter clothing to Ross and other whiskey dealers in order to make liquor purchases. <sup>99</sup>

<sup>98</sup>

Skinner, One Man in His Time, 206.

<sup>99</sup>

Major C. Wharton to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the West, 17 November 1845, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

Methods of procuring and hiding liquor did justice to the devotees of the art of enjoying a "lost week-end." One group of soldiers unsuccessfully attempted to smuggle whiskey into a military post by hiding a bottle inside a cat's skin. Others secreted their supply in liquor-soaked blankets which they rung out in the laundry sheds and salvaged the contents. Some wives collaborated by concealing an occasional jug at the bottom of the sugar barrel.<sup>100</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock observed an ingenious method by which liquor was illegally dispensed in the vicinity of Fort Gibson in 1842. A comely squaw stood outside the post gates, surrounded by a circle of prospective customers. When she thought no official was looking, she would pour drinks from a bottle which was hidden within the folds of her shawl, collecting in advance at the rate of "a bit a gill." When the supply dwindled, the bottle could be replenished merely by stepping into an adjacent clump of brush where an old crone guarded the main supply.<sup>101</sup>

In 1840 General Mathew Arbuckle complained to the Adjutant General's Office that desertion and drunkenness were throttling the effectiveness of his command. The reply from the Adjutant General indicated that he, like Arbuckle,

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Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 49f.

101

Foreman, A Traveller in Indian Territory, 96f.

favored a return to the former system of the sutler's maintaining a supply of good whiskey. It was hoped that desertions would thereby decrease and excessive drinking would diminish when the whiskey supply was controlled by the military authorities.<sup>102</sup>

Major George Andrews, commander at Fort Gibson in 1852, added his appeal for the restoration of the sutler's liquor sales. He reported that soldiers in his command were becoming drunk at "groggeries" and houses of ill repute adjacent to the military reservation. In the meantime, Andrews observed, civil officers of the Cherokee Nation were not equipped to handle the problem with any degree of forcefulness.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, between 1832 and 1860 sutlers usually ignored regulations and kept a generous stock of liquors. Arnold Harris, sutler at Fort Gibson in 1845, sold "Old Bourbon" and "Old Monogahela" whiskeys for one-dollar- and twenty-five cents per gallon or six-and-a quarter cents per gill.<sup>104</sup> The sutler at Fort Leavenworth in the 1850's was specifically prohibited from selling "ardent spirits," but was allowed to keep liquor for himself and his friends. Needless to say, dragoon officers at the post were quick to

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A.G.O. to General M. Arbuckle, 19 July 1840, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

103

Major G. Andrews to Colonel R. Jones, 24 March 1852, Ibid.

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Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 1834-47, 31 October 1845, Ibid.

take advantage of the sutler's friendship and hospitality. During the same period the commanding officer at Fort Mackinac, Michiga, interpreted the regulations liberally and allowed the sutler to sell beer and wine by the glassful for six cents a drink.<sup>106</sup> Similarly at Fort McIntosh, Texas, Colonel Joseph K. F. Mansfield reported that the sutler had a good supply of liquors on hand. Mansfield commented with tongue in cheek that the regulations were commonly disregarded at isolated posts in the belief that soldiers were harmed more by the liquor which they might obtain from illegal dealers in the area.<sup>107</sup> Despite the possible penalty of losing his contract, sutlers continued to stock large and varied quantities of liquor. For example, the post council of administration at Fort Randall in 1858 surveyed the sutler's accounts and price lists in November of that year and recommended certain price changes on liquor. Blackberry, Raspberry, and Cherry brandies were reduced from \$2.25 to \$2.00 per bottle, while Port and Sherry wines were raised from the former price to \$3.00 a bottle.<sup>108</sup>

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105

Glisan, Journal of Army Life, 20.

106

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Mackinac 1840-48, 29 July 1845, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

107

Colonel J.K.F. Mansfield, Report of Inspection, Fort McIntosh, 1856, 47 (old pagination), Ibid.

108

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Randall 1856-60, 20 November 1858, Ibid.; see also War Department, General Regulations for...1847, par. 208, 28.

Thus the long-term problem of alcoholism had many solutions; including substitution of the daily liquor ration for extra coffee and sugar, systems of reward and punishment, a local option plan -- with the power of interpreting the regulations in the hands of unit commanders. Another approach was attempted with some success with the formation of local temperance societies in the early 1830's. The temperance movement had been a part of the Protestant churches' reform program for nearly two decades, before Reverend Jeremiah Porter started one in 1831 at Sault Ste. Marie near Fort Brady. In addition to supporting his own group, Porter frequently spoke to the temperance society which had been formed within the garrison by the commanding officer, Captain James Wilcox. About seventy-two of the hundred-and-fifteen man command joined the society much to Porter's delight. An impasse occurred during the spring of 1832 when the sutler placed an order for one-hundred barrels of beer without realizing the intensity of the temperance movement. Inasmuch as he was a participator in the society, he asked the men of the garrison to take a vote on the matter and when only eighteen voted in favor of stocking the beer, he voluntarily rejected the shipment and forfeited his commission. About the same time, Porter hit upon a scheme to aid the soldiers in their temperance program by establishing a savings bank for them. Each soldier who



participated deposited with Porter the amount he ordinarily would spend for beer and whiskey per week. During one enlistment one man was able to save \$150 in having taken the pledge and having made his weekly deposits. <sup>109</sup> A similar temperance organization was formed at Fort Winnebago, Wisconsin Territory in 1835 by Reverend Abel Barber. Barber had been hired as the post chaplain in 1834 and during his term of office had the good fortune to have the commanding officer, Colonel Enos Cutler, in his temperance society. <sup>110</sup>

Colonel E. A. Hitchcock ordinarily was not impressed by the mental or spiritual attainments of soldiers, and when he was stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in 1848, he groaned mightily at the assignment of mustering out mobs of volunteer troops who were returning from Mexico. However, the formation of a temperance union there did encourage him somewhat. During the program of conversion to the "cold water army," soldiers at the post heard a series of temperance lectures after which nearly four hundred regulars and volunteers signed the temperance pledge. <sup>111</sup> Colonel

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109

Jeremiah Porter, Journal of Incidents, 1831-33, December 6, 1831; January 28, 1832; May 8, 1832, microfilm copy in Phillips Collection, University of Oklahoma Library.

110

W.M. Ferry to E. Greene, February 8, 1832; A. Barber to E. Greene, March 19, 1835, MS. in Reports of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

111

Croffut, (ed.), Fifty Years in Camp and Field, 180.

Gustavus Loomis, commanding officer at Fort Gibson in 1846-47, attended a number of "temperance musters" near the post. He was frequently accompanied by a number of officers and enlisted men, and on two occasions members of the post band attended the meeting to take part in the program by playing several marches and national tunes. The editor of the Cherokee Advocate, then engaged in a vigorous campaign to have Fort Gibson removed from the Cherokee Nation, stopped his editorial tirades long enough to give high praise to Colonel Loomis and his fellow temperance sympathizers. <sup>112</sup>

Illness frequently became chronic with certain individuals, who apparently developed illnesses due to extreme climatic conditions. Two possibilities were open to commanding officers whenever a man became physically unfit for active duty. On one hand, an officer might be granted a leave of absence varying from two weeks to one year. If a person's health did not improve at the end of a year, he usually resigned from the service. Enlisted men were usually carried on the sick rolls for some time before a medical discharge was given, inasmuch as few soldiers ever returned from lengthy furloughs. Lieutenant Levi M. Nute, for example, was granted a special furlough in April, 1833 with orders from the Adjutant General's Office for him to travel from Jefferson Barracks to Virginia Springs, Missouri. Nute

112

The Cherokee Advocate, May 7, 1846; October 8, 1846; March 4, 1847.

was provided with military transportation and was given an extension to his leave to have enough time to benefit from the medicinal waters. The officer ultimately resigned from the army in 1838 for reasons of health and died at the early age of forty-six at Port Isabel, Texas eight years later.<sup>113</sup>

After thirty-five years of army service, most of which was spent on the frontier, General Mathew Arbuckle found in 1833 that he could not continue in a command position because of the state of his health. He was given a six months' leave of absence starting in June, 1834. Soldier to the last, Arbuckle spoke words of regret at a dinner given in his honor at Fort Gibson on June 12, 1834, and later he was given a rousing send off by men he assumed he would not see again.<sup>114</sup> The General returned to Fort Gibson in January, 1835, but before the year was ended he had submitted two requests for a leave of absence for his health. Arbuckle informed the Adjutant General that a trip to White Sulphur Springs in northwestern Arkansas was necessary. The General supported his requests with a statement from his physician who recommended the medicinal waters for an enlarged spleen. Although his requests were refused, inasmuch as staff officers were difficult to replace, Arbuckle

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Colonel R. Jones to Lieutenant L.M. Nute, 3 April 1833, 1833, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received; see also Cullum, Biographical Register, I, 256.

114

The National Intelligencer, July 3, 1834.

survived the rigors of frontier life and the disability of an enlarged spleen until 1851, when he died at Fort Smith at the age of seventy-five.<sup>115</sup>

Other officers believed in the curative powers of medicinal waters to be obtained at various health resorts and mentioned them specifically in requests and orders for leaves of absence. Major Benjamin L. E. Bonneville was granted a leave of absence to travel from Texas to Sulphur Springs, Virginia, shortly after the close of the War with Mexico. Dr. Elisha J. Bailey submitted a certificate to accompany Bonneville's application, wherein it was indicated that the latter's health had been seriously impaired from long service in Mexico and that the waters should be beneficial.<sup>116</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Dixon S. Miles, likewise, was a firm believer in mineral waters. Upon the recommendation of Dr. Joseph Bailey, Miles issued a special order to Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Ruggles to escort a group of fifteen soldiers to Oil Springs, about thirty miles northwest of Fort Washita. Miles hoped that the waters and a fifteen-day furlough in mid-June,

<sup>115</sup>

General M. Arbuckle to Colonel R. Jones, 7 April 1835; 3 February 1836, Fort Gibson Letters Sent 1834-36, A.G.O.; Hammersly, Complete Regular Army Register, I, 263.

<sup>116</sup>

Surgeon E. J. Bailey to Lieutenant F. F. Flint, 8 May 1848; Major B.L. E. Bonneville to Lieutenant F. F. Flint, 78 May 1848, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

would help alleviate their chronic ailments.<sup>117</sup>

When an enlisted man was believed unfit for duty, his unit surgeon would examine him and present a certificate of disability to the commanding officer. The latter in turn would recommend to the departmental commander that the soldier in question be given a medical discharge based on the findings of himself and the surgeon. For example, Private Joseph Smith was given a certificate of disability, when it was learned that his eruptive skin condition kept him on the sick list most of the time. Upon further investigation, Dr. Charles Sutherland, who served Fort Towson in 1845, recommended that Smith be adjudged partially insane because of his habits of disappearing for several days and then suddenly turning up at another post under another name.<sup>118</sup> Surgeon Madison Mills recommended medical discharges for Privates George White and William Chadon in 1848. White was a chronic alcoholic and showed evidence of diseased stomach, liver, and urithra. Chadon, on the other hand, had developed an incurable lung disorder as a result of a very severe case of measles shortly after he had enlisted.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>  
Lieutenant Colonel D.S. Miles to Lieutenant F. F. Flint, 2 June 1850, Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>  
Copy of Certificate of Disability for Private Joseph Smith, 1845, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West, Letters Received.

<sup>119</sup>  
Copies of Certificates of Disability for Privates G. White and W. Chadon, 15 November 1848, Ibid.

Some cases were not as stereotyped as military correspondence might indicate. For example, Private John Langdon, stationed at Ringgold Barracks, Texas, in 1849, could not adapt to the intense local climate and was recommended for a medical discharge. Major George Deas, Langdon's commanding officer, appended the surgeon's recommendation with the notation that although Langdon was attempting to support his aged mother with his army pay, for the good of the service he ought to be given a medical discharge. <sup>120</sup> The nineteenth century "sad-sack" was occasionally encountered in the military service on the frontier. In 1850, Captain Randolph B. Marcy found one such person in his command at Fort Arbuckle. Marcy recommended an immediate discharge upon detecting the man: "He...Private Oberland Victor...is physically so weak that he is often unable to carry his musket upon a march. He is constitutionally so timid that he cannot cross a stream of any magnitude without the aid of others. He is so stupid that it is very difficult for him to comprehend an order...." With Marcy's recommendation was Dr. Rodney Glisan's opinion on the certificate of disability, "I believe that his mental faculties are not stronger than many who are treated as <sup>121</sup> idiots in the insane asylums of our country."

<sup>120</sup>  
Major G. Deas to Captain B. Bragg, 28 February 1849, Ibid.

<sup>121</sup>  
Captain R. B. Marcy to Major F. N. Page, 26 December 1850, Ibid.

Officers and surgeons at frontier posts were very willing to find ways and means of discharging physical and mental incompetents, who were unable to make satisfactory adjustments to army life. These same administrators, however, had definite qualms concerning the ultimate disposition of seasoned soldiers who had become disabled by disease, battle wounds, or old age. No satisfactory pension system was arranged until after the Civil War, when it became politically expedient to take care of veterans. During the thirty years prior to the advent of mass pension bills, a number of plans had been proposed and carried out. In some cases regimental surgeons would carry a disabled soldier on the sick rolls as long as possible, if there was some hope of his recovery. As previously mentioned, many officers used their prerogative of requesting leaves of absence for reasons of health. However, many were forced to resign their commissions when ill health did not permit their returning to active duty.

The General Regulations provided that company funds could be used for "temporary relief to indigent or disabled officers and soldiers, honorably discharged from the services, under circumstances which entitles them to it." This was true until the 1857 edition of the Regulations when mention of aiding old soldiers was omitted. <sup>122</sup> Post and company

122

War Department, General Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1835, 86; General Regulations for... 1841, 31; General Regulations for...1847, 53; and General Regulations for...1857, 26.

funds were never very great, and so many other uses were made of the funds that the plan was never entirely satisfactory. In 1811 Congress created a hospital for aged and disabled personnel on the basis of a fund which was collected at the rate of twenty cents a month from every officer and man in that branch of the service. Maintenance and medical expenses were paid from the fund, which fortunately was supplemented by annual Congressional appropriations. In 1829 the House Committee on Military Affairs approved a similar plan for an Army Asylum for aged and disabled officers.<sup>123</sup>

In response to the Committee's suggestion, Secretary of War Peter B. Porter prepared a report based on his own opinion and those of the Adjutant General, the Surgeon General, the General-in-Chief, the Paymaster General, and the Quartermaster General. All except General Jesup agreed that the establishment of a soldier's home would benefit the nation and would raise the morale of all army men. Only Quartermaster General Thomas S. Jesup dissented, asserting quite logically that such an institution might well become a haven for social misfits, and recommended instead that adequate pensions should be awarded.<sup>124</sup>

There was a total lack of agreement in higher circles

123  
41f. Williams, The United States Public Health Service,  
124  
American State Papers, Military Affairs, IV, 95f.



as to whether the cost of erection and maintenance should fall on the government or whether officers and soldiers should contribute during their terms of service to a fund for maintenance and to provide medical service, leaving only the cost of construction to the government. General Nathan Towson indicated complete agreement with the latter plan but added a novel suggestion of forming invalid companies of disabled soldiers who might perform light garrison duties so that healthier personnel might be released for active duty on the frontier.

In 1830 the views of staff officers on this subject were supplemented by opinions from officers serving on the western frontier. Major William Davenport wrote from Jefferson Barracks that he favored the establishment of a government operated hospital inasmuch as his regimental funds were almost exhausted by the demands of disabled soldiers who formerly were in his command. Davenport indicated that many men had been kept in post hospitals much longer than necessary rather than turn them out to suffer from neglect. Major Stephen W. Kearny, who commanded at Fort Crawford in 1829, heartily agreed with the projected plan on the ground that soldiers who had declined in health while serving their

125

Ibid., IV, 97f.

126

Major W. Davenport to Lieutenant Colonel S. Cooper, 8 March 1830, A.G.O., Letters Received.

country ought to be aided in times of personal distress. Kearny suggested two hospitals, one in Washington, D.C., and another in the Ohio Valley region. The Major suggested that funds could be accumulated from post funds, voluntary contributions, Congressional appropriations, and fines collected from soldiers convicted of drunkenness. Kearny was most adamant on the latter point and maintained that a more rigid control of intemperance would decrease the need for a home for disabled soldiers.<sup>127</sup>

The movement languished for many years and was not revived until after the Mexican War. In the heat of patriotism the proposal was reintroduced in Congress and vigorously supported by President Zachary Taylor "as a means of increasing the efficiency of the Army and as an act of justice from a grateful country to the faithful soldier." Millard Fillmore, Taylor's successor, likewise added his support to the program and urged Congress to act upon the matter as soon as possible.<sup>128</sup> In 1851 Congress finally acted and appropriated sufficient funds to build a soldiers' home, whose maintenance costs would be partially met by post and regimental funds. A board of commissioners was appointed to superintend

<sup>127</sup>  
Major S. W. Kearny to Colonel R. Jones, 8 March 1830, Ibid.  
<sup>128</sup>

James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents 1789-1897 (Washington, 1900), V, 21; 88.

the selection of a site in Washington, and the final construction and operation of the hospital.<sup>129</sup> Contributions to the latter fund varied considerably according to the abilities of the respective post councils of administration. For example, in 1852 the post council at Fort Gibson earmarked over eighty dollars for the "Army Asylum."<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, the post council at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, appropriated, in three successive years, amounts which varied from ten cents to ten dollars for the same project.<sup>131</sup>

Soldiers received far better medical care than civilians. Few communities on the western frontier could boast the services of a full time, experienced physician, whereas, some military posts with only one or two hundred men had as many as three surgeons. Whenever possible, preventative medicine and sanitation were applied to insure healthful surroundings for soldiers. Intemperance, the greatest single cause of sickness was frowned on and discouraged. The soldier further was assured a comfortable home when chronic illness, physical injuries, and old age had finally disabled him.

<sup>129</sup>

Ibid., V, 132.

<sup>130</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Gibson, 16 April 1852, Records of Army Commands, Department of the West.

<sup>131</sup>

Post Council of Administration Book, Fort Ridgely, 1854-56, Ibid.

During the thirty years before the Civil War daily life at the average western military post followed a normal pattern. From reveille to taps duties and extra chores were carried out within the highly regimented atmosphere of the military world. However, the human element, the random assortment of officers and men, prevented complete monotony and mechanization as this survey has attempted to indicate.

The matter of survival in the wilderness was met as a natural problem and was solved through the combined abilities of officers and men of the United States Army. Natural resources of water, wood, and stone were usually found in abundance in the West, but the matter of fashioning something useful and relatively permanent in respect to shelter and fortifications became the end result of brain and muscle. The dynamic quality of the nineteenth century western frontier was well marked in the varied activities of both officers and enlisted men.

Certain food items, such as salt pork, dried beans, coffee, and sugar, were shipped hundreds of miles into the interior for the army's maintenance. Fresh vegetables, some fruits, and fresh meat, however, were produced in varying quantities near most western posts. The frontier soldier met the challenge of becoming self-sufficient through hunting expeditions and through well developed gardening pursuits. The indomitable frontier storekeeper, the sutler, added his stocks of packaged and tinned foods to the unusually

varied military diet.

Formal recreation facilities and professional entertainment were usually lacking at frontier military posts, but the average soldier knew countless outlets for his excess energies. Hunting, fishing, dancing, card playing, and impromptu theatricals were the core of leisure time activities. The occasional visitor, likewise, offered the opportunity for the "forgotten men" of the nineteenth century to engage in the popular pastime of intelligent conversation and amiable visiting.

Finally, in the matter of forming a self-sufficient community, the military utilized the talents of ambitious, adventurous physicians and ministers. The latter offered the element of stability to an otherwise rough and impetuous social group. Both doctors and clergy counseled moderation and conservation of energy in order for the military organization to function as a whole and as efficiently as possible.

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