STANDING IN THE GAP: SUBPOSTS, MINOR POSTS, AND
PICKET STATIONS AND THE PACIFICATION OF
THE TEXAS FRONTIER, 1866-1886

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Loyd M. Uglow, B.A., M.A.
Denton, Texas
May, 1995
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This dissertation describes the various military outposts on the Texas frontier between 1866 and 1886. It is arranged geographically, with each chapter covering a major fort or geographical area and the smaller posts associated with it. Official military records and government reports serve as the primary sources of data.

In 1866 when the United States Army returned to the defense of Texas after four years of civil war, the state's frontier lay open to depredations from several Indian tribes and from lawless elements in Mexico. The army responded to those attacks by establishing several lines of major forts to protect the various danger areas of the frontier. To extend its control and protection to remote, vulnerable, or strategically important points within its jurisdiction, each major fort established outposts.

Two main categories of outposts existed in Texas, subposts and picket stations. Subposts served as permanent scouting camps or guarded strategic points or lines of communication. Picket stations protected outlying locations, such as stage stations, that were particularly
vulnerable to attack. Because Indians raiding in Texas usually operated in fairly small groups, garrisons at outposts were similarly small. Company-sized detachments generally garrisoned subposts, and picket stations seldom held more than a dozen troops, often fewer.

The army used outposts haphazardly during the first few years after the Civil War. Commanders developed standard tactics for outpost garrisons, but they failed to form a comprehensive strategy incorporating a series of outposts in the plan to pacify a particular region until the late 1870s. At that time, Colonel Benjamin Grierson and others began forming a systematic network of outposts in far West Texas. Concentrating his outposts at the region's few water sources, Grierson was able to use those posts as an effective part of a strategy that eventually brought an end to danger from Apaches in that part of the state.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A number of individuals provided help and encouragement to me during the research and writing of this work. To all of them I wish to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation. My friend Steve Wilson introduced me to the outposts of the Texas frontier during a camping trip to Grierson’s Spring. John Neilson, historian and archivist at Fort Concho, suggested the present study. He and other members of the staff there helped me with detailed research in the fort’s archives.

Mary Williams at Fort Davis National Historic Site gave me a free hand in the fort’s archives and provided valuable help in my research. Vicki Stone at Fort Stockton Public Library allowed me to borrow many essential rolls of microfilm military records through interlibrary loan. Jerry Sullivan and Dan Crouch, with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, went out of their way to give me every possible assistance in getting copies of military records and information in their possession. Jim Bradshaw at the Haley Memorial Library in Midland guided me to a number of valuable sources in their holdings. Edna Roberts at Southwestern College helped me tremendously by obtaining countless titles for me through interlibrary loan.

Again to all, I say thanks.
I first became interested in the army's outposts on the Texas frontier after a camping trip to one of them, Grierson's Spring, in the desolate country west of Fort Concho during the winter of 1991. My companions and I found the post in ruins, as one would expect after more than a century of abandonment, but the absence of the restoration and improvements typically found at a historic site gave the old post a certain timeless quality that fascinated me. The only artifact we ran across was a single cavalry uniform button. That button, the crumbling stone walls of barracks and stables, and the old cisterns that used to hold the only water for many miles, stirred my curiosity about the post and the men that had served there.

I found that the large number of secondary works on the military history of the Texas frontier covered major forts in great detail but contained only passing references to outposts such as Grierson's Spring. Nothing remotely approaching a comprehensive study of the smaller military posts of the region existed. That deficiency prompted this present work.

I desired to investigate those outposts in relation to the major forts that controlled them and to determine their place in the context of the military situation on the Texas
frontier. The sheer numbers of outposts that existed during the period, approximately seventy, indicated their importance to army strategy. The fact that the military continued to use them over a twenty-year span served as additional evidence of their significance to defense and pacification of the frontier. Those two factors justified the study.

In this work, I hoped to detail the periods in which each outpost existed, its major functions and accomplishments, and something about the troops that manned it, as well as the reasons for establishing and, ultimately, deactivating it. I also wanted to explore the role of outposts in relation to other elements of concern to the army on the Texas frontier, such as mobility and communications. From the study, I desired to draw conclusions about the utility and effectiveness of those outposts as they fit into overall strategy and thus to shed light on one element of the military picture not previously investigated in detail by historians.

I consulted several kinds of primary sources for material on Texas outposts. A few memoirs and reminiscences of army officers and enlisted men of the time, such as Mason Maxon, provided valuable references to some of those small posts. In like manner, a handful of accounts left by army wives of the period furnished bits and pieces of information. Dependents usually stayed at major forts,
however, and had little contact with the small outposts at which their men often served.

Official reports of scouts and expeditions, contained in the archival records of major forts, offered more precise and significant details of many of the outposts along with original maps, which put directions and distances into perspective. Letters and orders in those same records proved extremely fruitful sources of material on both the outposts and the major forts with which they were associated. Post and regimental returns, held by the National Archives and available in microfilm copies, provided a great deal of hard information, although they gave very little amplification to those basic facts.

Annual reports of the Secretary of War contained tabular listings of major forts and the outposts under their control, along with details on their garrisons. In addition, those reports presented summaries of operations involving troops at various outposts and indicated the establishment or closing of certain outposts and the reasons for doing so. In some cases, military commanders evaluated the effectiveness of the outposts on the Texas frontier and explained tactics that troops there had employed.

Newspapers of the period would seem to be a logical source for more primary material on frontier outposts. Unfortunately, the great majority made little mention of outposts or the troops that manned them. That absence of
information may have resulted from the remoteness of many of the outposts from towns that had newspapers, or possibly from the fact that troops at those outposts very seldom actually saw or fought Indians. Additionally, when newspapers did describe military actions, official reports of those same actions supplied more accurate, if often less thrilling, accounts of the events.

Secondary sources proved particularly valuable in two areas, the background and history of major forts and the course of significant campaigns. Because this study focused on a rather narrow aspect of military history, broad works on the army’s role on the frontier provided general information but little relevant detail on outposts.

I faced several possible choices in organizing this work. Arranging the material chronologically seemed to have certain advantages, chiefly the ability to take the reader through the period in a beginning-to-end narrative without the inconvenience of going back and forth in time. That benefit, however, could not counteract the equally great disadvantage of having to jump spatially from post to post as every year was covered. The loss of continuity in the coverage of individual posts would have been too great a burden on the reader.

A second possibility, discussing outposts by size or some other category, would have provided some interesting comparisons and allowed the reader to see those posts from
certain aspects not present in other approaches. I have dealt with them according to function and type to a limited degree in the final chapter of this work as I analyzed their effectiveness.

Other writings on this region and period have followed the movements of particular military units as their organizational approach. But that method would have proved highly unsatisfactory here because it would have shifted the emphasis away from the main topic of the study, the outposts, to the units that manned them.

I settled on a geographical organization based on a discussion of each major fort and its accompanying outposts, as the most logical and easiest to follow. Granted, some difficulties exist with this approach, primarily the continual movement back and forth in time. But any study encompassing an area as large as the Texas frontier over a period of twenty years would likely have that problem. This approach allows a logical and manageable examination of the state's outposts in relation to the area and the other posts most closely related to them.

I have sought to acquaint my readers with a subject that had a great bearing on the settlement and pacification of the Texas frontier. The ancient Israelite prophet Ezekiel wrote, "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none"
(Ezekiel 22:30). Almost 2500 years later a different group of men took up the challenge to stand in the gap, to protect the land and people from destruction. This is the story of those men and the outposts that they defended.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Pacification of the Texas frontier during the late nineteenth century posed great difficulties for its guardian, the United States Army. The size of the region, the nature of its land, and the characteristics of adjacent regions provided some of the problems. The army's human opponents in this contest--primarily several nomadic Indian tribes and, secondarily, Mexican raiders from across the Rio Grande--proved to be elusive and deadly foes. Problems associated with mobility, logistics, and communications placed constraints on military operations and affected the final outcome of the struggle as much as the actual combat power of the units involved. These and other variables influenced the nation's military leaders to establish a network of major military posts, often several days' travel apart, supplemented by subposts, minor posts, and picket stations at particularly critical points. This combined network, both offensive and defensive in character, played a leading role in the eventual pacification of the frontier region of Texas during the period from 1866 to 1886.

The Texas frontier in 1866 presented its military protectors with a tremendous challenge from the standpoint
TEXAS FRONTIER ZONES

Figure 1
of size alone. Rather than a single line, it consisted of three separate zones. Starting in Grayson county on the Red River, the first zone stretched four hundred miles in a long curve toward the southwest, coming to an indistinct end on the western edge of the Hill Country. This zone had a depth of one hundred miles or more in many places, with widely scattered ranches and mail stations on the western fringes and increasing settlement as one moved east. The second zone ran close to four hundred miles northwestward up the Rio Grande from the Gulf of Mexico to Del Rio. The third zone consisted of isolated ranches and occasional stage stations running westward from the junction of the first two zones to El Paso. Between 1866 and 1886 the number of ranches and small settlements in this last zone multiplied and spread into areas increasingly remote from the main roads. During the same period the first zone edged westward as daring settlers drove cattle onto ground that had belonged to the buffalo just a short time before.

The most significant natural feature of this vast frontier from a military point of view was its lack of water. Although this aridity posed no problems to commands operating close to the Rio Grande or the more northerly rivers as they curved down toward the Gulf, men travelling cross-country had to choose their routes carefully to take advantage of scarce springs and water holes. Lack of water often caused troops to break off pursuit of raiding Indians
and in summer even endangered their lives. One of the key features in the army's eventual success in defeating their Indian opponents was ongoing reconnaissance of the land until every possible water source had been located, charted, and in some cases garrisoned.

In addition to vast size and lack of water, a third feature of the frontier that affected the military situation was the presence of adjacent regions that offered protection to raiders. Two such areas, Mexico on the south and Indian Territory on the north, served as political sanctuaries from which attackers could operate and to which they could safely return. To the west rugged mountains and the intimidating Staked Plains provided havens made safe by nature rather than politics. Eventually a combination of diplomacy and military necessity opened the Rio Grande and Red River barriers, and dogged marches by officers such as Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie and Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Shafter proved that troops could operate on the Staked Plains.

The Texas frontier offered enticing booty to Indians who had swept through the region on annual raids for decades or even centuries. Parties of Comanches and Kiowas, large and small, penetrated far into the settlements from the north and west, taking horses, scalps, and captives back with them to villages in Indian Territory or on the Staked Plains. Small groups of Lipan and Mescalero Apaches wreaked havoc from the west. Kickapoos, exiled far from their
native hunting grounds in the north, practiced hit-and-run attacks on the Rio Grande frontier from the safety of Mexico. These tribes moved fast, knew the country intimately, and usually vanished before troops sent after them could close in.

Especially on the lower reaches of the Rio Grande, Mexican cattle thieves made frontier ranches dangerous places to live. Unlike Indians, who might ride hundreds of miles on a raid, these bandits merely had to slip a few miles across the river, capture an unguarded herd, and dash back into Mexico. Ranchers who resisted often paid with their lives. During some periods of political unrest, warring factions might cross or be driven over the river, adding yet another problem with which the army had to contend.

Whether raiders were Indian or Mexican, the army faced a tremendous challenge in attempting to find and catch them. It quickly became obvious to military commanders on the frontier that success in this venture required mobility. A static defense was of little value except in warding off attacks on remote mail and stage stations. Mounted patrols, coupled later with large-scale offensive operations against enemy sanctuaries, became the primary tactic of the Texas frontier army. These patrols usually consisted of cavalry units, but infantry mounted on horses or mules saw considerable action on certain parts of the frontier.
Troops and their horses and mules could consume large quantities of supplies. Military commanders rapidly taught their men to subsist on what they could carry themselves when in the field--bacon, hardtack, and coffee--supplemented by occasional deer or antelope. But government animals, unlike Indian ponies who lived on virtually nothing but grass, quickly lost strength to continue patrol or pursuit without a steady supply of forage. That required supply wagons, mule trains, or centrally located supply camps. In addition to this, military columns sometimes needed to carry enough water for men and animals for several days in certain areas and during certain seasons. This necessitated the use of a water wagon. Thus, logistics became a major concern of the army on the Texas frontier.

Communications, too, had a great bearing on the military's ability to defeat its opponents and pacify the frontier. A good communications system would allow coordinated movement of troops from distant points to converge on an enemy force and would provide advance warning of likely attack.

Several modes of communication appeared on the Texas frontier during the period from 1866 to 1886. The most basic of these was the wagon road. Troops often built these roads. In fact, many units probably spent as much time on road work as on patrol. Railroads also spanned the frontier along a number of routes in the seventies and eighties.
Both provided added mobility for troops in addition to their utility as lines of communication and supply. Military telegraph lines crisscrossed the frontier zones in the same period, giving the army even more rapid communications capabilities.

Solving mobility, logistics, and communications problems would have meant nothing to the army without a network of posts from which troops could operate. The posts were the framework, the skeleton, around which the entire military defense structure was built.

The first United States military posts in Texas were constructed during or shortly after the Mexican War. The Indian Frontier Line, built in 1849, consisted of forts Worth, Graham, Gates, Croghan, Martin Scott, Lincoln, and Inge. As the name of the line implied, these forts served to protect the frontier and advanced settlements from Indian incursions from the north and west.\(^1\) Fort Graham stood on the Brazos River, between Fort Worth and Waco. Fort Gates was placed fifty miles southwest of Fort Graham. Next came Fort Croghan, sixty miles northwest of Austin. Fort Martin Scott occupied a key strategic position outside Fredericksburg and within one hundred miles east of several major Indian trails. Fort Lincoln was located next to the German settlement of D’Hanis. Fort Inge protected the road from San Antonio to El Paso, eighty miles southwest of the former. Even at this early date the army made efforts to
PRE-WAR TEXAS FORTS

- Ft. Belknap
- Ft. Cooper
- Ft. Phantom Hill
- Ft. Chadbourne
- Ft. Graham
- Ft. Gates
- Ft. Croghan
- Ft. McKavett
- Ft. Martin Scott
- Ft. Terrett
- Ft. Mason
- Camp Verde
- Ft. Lancaster
- Ft. Hudson
- Ft. Inge
- Ft. Lincoln
- Ft. Duncan
- Ft. McDonald
- Ft. Brown
- Ft. Davis
- Ft. Quitman
- Ft. Stockton
- Ft. Clark

• 1840's Construction
△ 1850's Construction

0 50 100 miles

Figure 2
tie these posts together by a series of direct, all-weather roads.²

Fort Brown, built during the Mexican War, already anchored the southernmost end of the Rio Grande frontier zone. The army extended its protection upriver by building Ringgold Barracks near Rio Grande City, Fort McIntosh at Laredo, and Fort Duncan at Eagle Pass as part of the program begun in 1849.³

These two lines of forts failed to provide adequate protection to the frontier for two main reasons. First, the line of settlements advanced westward at such a rate that it soon passed beyond the protection of the forts. Second, the government stationed too few troops in the state to patrol adequately the many avenues through which raiding Indians might slip to attack settlers.⁴

As a result of popular pressure for better protection and the government’s own desire to guard the mail route to the Pacific, the United States started a new series of forts in 1851. The line roughly followed the stage route which entered Texas at Preston on the Red River and continued southwest to El Paso.⁵ On the northeast end of this line, Fort Belknap stood next to the Brazos River, 150 miles southwest of Preston. Next came Fort Phantom Hill in Jones County and Fort Chadbourne in Coke County. In 1854 the government erected Camp Cooper between Belknap and Phantom Hill.⁶
From Fort Chadbourne a branch swung south off this line to the Rio Grande, with Fort McKavett, Fort Terrett, and Fort Clark placed to provide a defensive barrier for settlers in the Hill Country. McKavett, northernmost of the trio, overlooked the San Saba River. Thirty miles southwest lay Terrett on the North Llano River. Fort Clark stood at the end of the line, eighty miles south of Terrett and just twenty-five from Mexico.

Continuing west from Fort Chadbourne along the mail route, the main line of posts included Forts Stockton, Davis, and Bliss. Fort Bliss, built in 1849 then deactivated for a time, was brought back into service in 1854. Although an important link on the mail route and in protection of the international border, it was too remote from Texas settlements and most of the enemies that menaced them to play a vital role in defending the state's frontier. Fort Davis, constructed in 1854, assumed a much more active part in the pacification of the frontier, primarily because of its central location in lands frequented by parties of Indians and often crossed by settlers and immigrants. The government did not establish Fort Stockton until 1859, but it, like Fort Davis, held a key position. It sat at the junction of the mail route and a major Comanche war trail and covered the best living spring for many miles around.

Additional posts built in the 1850s met specific local needs or protected areas not defended by the major lines of
forts. The United States established several of these in the years just prior to the Civil War. They included forts Lancaster, Hudson, and Quitman at vital points along the roads from San Antonio to El Paso. Camp Verde, near Kerrville, and Fort Mason, farther north in the Hill Country, also fit into that general category and existed to protect localities subject to frequent raids.

At the beginning of the Civil War the United States Army evacuated all of its posts on the Texas frontier and did not return to them until the war ended. Troops reoccupied posts on the lower Rio Grande during the summer and fall of 1865, before any others. These included Fort Brown, Fort McIntosh, and Ringgold Barracks. Fort Bliss at El Paso also received a garrison. Troops at these points could offer protection against cross-border forays by bandits and Indians residing in Mexico and against threats from the forces of Emperor Maximilian, but they offered no defense for the rest of the frontier.

During the late summer of 1866, the state's new governor, James W. Throckmorton, began to request federal troops for the remainder of the frontier. Indian raids were causing severe loss of life and property in many Texas settlements. Although inclined to dismiss Texans' claims of Indian depredations as either exaggerated or completely false, military authorities led by General Philip Sheridan began sending troops back to resume defense of the
ungarrisoned majority of the frontier. By the end of the year, troops had reoccupied forts Inge, Clark, and Mason, and Camp Verde; elements of the Sixth Cavalry Regiment had moved into Jacksboro in north Texas.\textsuperscript{12}

Over the next two years troops reactivated most of the forts on the outer line of the frontier and up the Rio Grande, including Stockton, Davis, Hudson, Chadbourne, Belknap, Quitman, Duncan, McKavett, and Lancaster. The army abandoned several of these, plus Fort Inge, Fort Mason, and Camp Verde, as permanent posts shortly afterwards but still used them, when the need arose, as temporary outposts.\textsuperscript{13}

In addition, troops built three large new posts to cover the northern and central portion of the frontier. Fort Richardson stood just outside Jacksboro. Sixty-five miles west Fort Griffin commanded high ground along the Clear Fork of the Brazos. Fort Concho guarded the confluence of the three branches of the Concho River.\textsuperscript{14}

The government added three more independent posts during the period up to 1886. Fort Elliott, established in 1875, guarded the Texas Panhandle and points in western Indian Territory and southern Kansas. Fort Hancock, initially known as Camp Rice, began as a subpost of Fort Davis in 1882 then became an independent post in 1884. It stood on the Rio Grande west of Big Bend along the road to El Paso.\textsuperscript{15} Camp Peña Colorado, south of Fort Davis, also
IMPORTANT
POST-CIVIL
WAR FORTS
IN TEXAS

Ft. Elliott A
Ft. Richardson
Ft. Griffin
Ft. Concho
Ft. McKavett
Ft. Hancock
Ft. Quitman
Ft. Stockton
Ft. Davis
Camp Peña Colorado
Ft. Clark
Ft. Duncan
Ft. McIntosh
Ringgold Barracks
Ft. Brown

□ Pre-War Construction
△ Post War Construction

0 50 100 miles

Figure 3
served as a subpost of that fort originally, but later achieved independent status.

In determining the precise location for a new post, those officers charged with making that decision had to consider several requirements. First among these was adequate water. A garrison of 150 men with an equal number of horses needed an abundant, permanent source of fresh water. In some instances officers choosing a site for a new post were deceived about the adequacy of the water supply. Creeks and springs often quit running in exceptionally dry years. Streams and even rivers sometimes contained water too salty or alkaline for even animals to drink. Such a water shortage caused more than one post to be abandoned.\[^{15}\]

Other necessities for a suitable post location included sources of fuel, building materials, and forage. Wood served as the universal fuel for both cooking and heating at military posts on the Texas frontier. In the drier areas of the state it could be scarce, forcing some commands to send detachments many miles to cut wood or dig roots. If wood was plentiful near the site chosen for a post, buildings and corrals might be constructed of it. Several forts operated small sawmills in remote stands of timber to furnish their lumber needs. In the absence of suitable timber, commands employed stone or adobe for construction. Finally, military posts required ample quantities of grass and hay, either available at hand or within close enough
proximity to allow detachments or civilian contractors to bring in supplies regularly.

When choosing the site for a post, military authorities considered comfort of the troops to be desirable but not a necessity. If other factors favored a certain location, a post would be established there, regardless of unfavorable climate or absence of a spot suitable for growing vegetables.\(^{17}\)

Major frontier posts followed a pattern of design that seldom varied significantly from post to post. An open rectangular parade ground formed the center of the post. Along one of the long sides of the rectangle stood individual quarters for officers. Enlisted barracks stretched the length of the opposite side. At some distance behind these barracks, troops constructed stables and a corral. Headquarters, hospital, and quartermaster's buildings occupied the short sides of the parade ground. Kitchens, a powder magazine, a guardhouse, a post trader's store, and various additional structures stood in other locations away from the parade ground.\(^{18}\)

Just as the army used a common pattern for arrangement of buildings at its forts, it provided blueprints and specifications for certain types of buildings usually found at a post. Within the scope of building materials available at the site, troops had to follow those design specifications. For this reason, hospitals and officers'
quarters at widely separated forts often looked identical. Structures considered less important, such as enlisted barracks or laundresses' quarters, were not as standardized.  

Stone, wood, and adobe served as the primary building materials used in forts on the Texas frontier. Each had its advantages and disadvantages. Usually troops worked with whatever was most readily available. In the early stages of construction, soldiers often lived in tents or crude temporary shelters made of wooden pickets.  

The army intended its Texas forts to serve as bases for mobile operations such as scouting, providing guards for mail or travellers, and, eventually, conducting large-scale offensives against Indians on their home ground. They were not designed for defense against a determined attacker. For this reason, very few posts had any defensive works such as palisade walls. On the very rare occasion when Indians did hit a frontier post, they always strove to capture government animals rather than destroy the garrison.  

Although the army relied on its major forts to provide the backbone of protection for the Texas frontier, it continually dispatched troops to remote outposts to cover vital points too far removed from the major posts. These outposts took a variety of designations depending upon their function and the number of troops assigned to them.
The generic designation, minor fort, described a post smaller or less significant than a major fort, but independently reporting to department or district headquarters and the Adjutant General's Office. In other words, troops serving at a minor fort were officially attached to that post rather than being on detached service from a larger fort. Camp Peña Colorado, Fort Elliott, Fort Hancock, and, during part of its existence, Fort Quitman fit the category of minor forts.

Subposts held garrisons, usually of one or two companies, on detached service from larger forts, and commanding officers of such subposts made reports to senior officers at those larger forts rather than directly to department headquarters or the Adjutant General's Office. Thus, subposts differed from minor forts in that the former were dependencies of other posts while the latter were independent. Major forts usually relieved the units garrisoning their subposts every thirty to sixty days. Subposts naturally had facilities cruder and less comfortable than those of independent posts. Occasionally subposts received independent status and became minor posts, or the opposite occurred. Both types of posts had responsibility for patrolling their geographic area and dealing with Indian or foreign marauders.

Commands frequently sent detachments to establish scouting camps in the heart of areas often traversed by
raiding bands. A scouting camp served as a base of operations for a force of approximately company size over a period of one month or more. During that time patrols fanned out to cover trails, fords, and water holes likely to be used by any bands passing through the vicinity. Scouting camps tended to be more temporary than subposts, although the functions of the two were quite similar.

When a particular point, such as a mail station, ranch, or water hole needed ongoing protection, the nearest post detached a detail of a dozen men or fewer to establish a picket station there. The parent post usually relieved the detail monthly. If the picket station was on the mail and stage line, its detail supplied a man to ride guard to the next station on each coach or wagon that passed through. Picket stations came under Indian attack far more frequently than any other type of military outpost on the Texas frontier.

On the major offensive expeditions undertaken against hostile Indians in Texas after the Civil War, the army used supply camps as logistical bases of support. Columns piercing the unknown regions of the Llano Estacado relied on such advance camps to provide the food, forage, and ammunition that never could have reached them directly from the main forts. Supply camps far in advance of the fort line gave troops the extra reach necessary to run the mobile
warriors to ground and attack them in their wilderness homes.

Various other types of camps existed for special purposes, primarily logistical. Several of the major forts on the frontier line set up semi-permanent sawmills in distant areas if the timber near the fort was inadequate. When grass played out around posts, some commands located choice grazing land up to a day's ride away. They would establish a grazing camp at the location and rotate their cavalry companies through it, allowing a month or more for each company to fatten its horses before having to return to the main post. Forts where hay was in short supply and could not be bought from contractors occasionally stationed a detachment in an area where it could be cut and hauled to the fort on a continual basis. Such a hay camp usually provided much harder work for its men than the troops at the main post experienced.

These various outposts played a central role in the struggle for the Texas frontier from 1866 to 1886. They served to tie the defensive cordon together, to provide bases for extensive scouting and patrols, and to establish a military presence that would discourage attacks on likely targets and maintain control over positions of strategic importance. The value of outposts varied with a region's terrain, the nature and scope of the threat, the size of the military force available, and the tactics employed. Their
importance in the army's defensive network and the pacification process can best be understood when they are examined in combination with related factors in that struggle and with the major forts so closely connected with them.
ENDNOTES


5. Ibid.


9. Ibid., 10.


12. Ibid., 126-27.

13. Ibid., 127-130.


17. Wooster, Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers, 10-11.
19. Ibid., 183.
20. Ibid., 176-83.
CHAPTER 2

FORT STOCKTON AND ITS OUTPOSTS

Fort Stockton, in the center of present-day Pecos County, occupied one of the most strategic locations on the Texas frontier. Established near the abundant artesian flow of Comanche Spring, the fort controlled a major source of water in that arid region. In addition, it guarded the junction of the San Antonio-El Paso road, the Overland mail route to the Pacific, and the Comanche War Trail.

The Comanche War Trail served as the principal route along which Comanche raiding parties travelled to Mexico from their hunting grounds above the Red River. These raids occurred virtually every year from the late eighteenth century until the mid-1870s. Large bands of Comanches usually chose late summer or early autumn, when Mexican horses and mules reached prime physical condition, to hit the northern settlements and ranches of Chihuahua.¹

Parties, sometimes of several hundred Comanches, rode south along the trail into northern Mexico, where they set up advance camps. From these they struck targets in the region over a period of weeks or months, gathering large herds of captured horses and mules, as well as numbers of
FORT STOCKTON AND ITS REGION

Figure 4
captive Mexican women and children. In winter or early spring the bands turned north, joined the trail, and followed it until they reached the southern fringe of their territory.²

The trail consisted of a number of individual branches in the north converging into a single broad route. That route ran south until it broke up into a series of smaller trails in the Big Bend country, each leading to a particular section of northern Mexico. Thus, the Comanche War Trail was not a single route but a series of branching trails on the north and south connected by a single middle section.³

The trail varied in appearance at different points on its length, but always presented a striking image to those who passed it. Near Fort Stockton it resembled a wide road made up of twenty-five smaller parallel trails worn deep into the ground and running close together. Huge Comanche horse herds packed the earth hard and eliminated grass along much of its length. At certain points the trail widened to two miles or more, and in many places observers on high ground could see it from miles away. About sixty miles south of Fort Stockton, the trail branched into two main arteries, one passing east of the Chisos Mountains and the other west, before crossing the Rio Grande.⁴

A Comanche raiding party using the trail forded the Pecos River at Horsehead Crossing. The war chief rode in the rear of the party while his second-in-command led the
column. Small detachments served as advance guards and rear guards, separated a mile or two from the main body. On occasion, similar detachments rode on either flank for additional security. The war chief might send out single scouts far from the band in particularly dangerous areas.5

Running west from San Antonio, the El Paso road carried military supply wagon trains to a number of frontier posts and served as a major route for immigrants heading for California. The United States mail also used that road, as well as the more northerly Overland mail route angling southwestward from Preston on the Red River to El Paso and beyond. These roads and the Comanche War Trail intersected at the site of Fort Stockton for one reason: Comanche Spring. An average of sixty million gallons of water per day flowed from this spring, providing more than enough for the largest Comanche raiding party, the longest immigrant train, or the thirstiest military column. Water rose from a number of locations and formed a stream twenty feet wide and two feet deep that ran for ten miles onto the arid plains before returning to the ground.6

Companies A, B, E, and K of the Ninth Cavalry Regiment under Colonel Edward Hatch reestablished Fort Stockton on July 7, 1867, the first United States troops at the fort since before the Civil War.7 Hatch had to quarter his troops in tents because the buildings had deteriorated during the war years. He pressed his superiors in the
District of Texas to allow rebuilding of permanent structures as soon as possible because the steady high winds at the site would ruin tents within sixty days. Hatch also worried about rumors in San Antonio that Stockton was last on the list of Texas posts in order of priority for rebuilding. In his opinion it was one of the most important forts on the Texas frontier and rated first priority in reconstruction. He suggested using adobe for most of the buildings, as no building timber stood within twenty miles of the fort and local stone was inferior in quality. To provide at least some lumber for construction, Hatch ordered Captain George Gamble and a detachment to scout the Guadalupe Mountains for a suitable location for a sawmill. A steam-powered saw had already arrived at Fort Stockton, and a sawyer and engineer accompanied Gamble's command into the mountains.

Duties of Hatch's command at Fort Stockton included pursuing raiding bands of Indians, scouting the region to prevent incursions, and escorting mail carriers and travellers on the roads that intersected at the fort. Fort Davis stood 75 miles west and Fort Clark 260 miles southeast, leaving the troops at Stockton with a huge area to protect.

Hatch favored reoccupation of a number of the old, abandoned posts and garrisoning several additional points to provide protection where it was most needed. He suggested
stationing one company of the Ninth Cavalry at old Fort Hudson, another at Fort Lancaster, and four at Fort Davis. One of the companies at Fort Davis should be detached to hold Fort Quitman on the Rio Grande. Of the four companies at Fort Stockton, he proposed sending one to guard Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos.\(^{11}\)

Heavy Indian activity east of the fort, including a bloody skirmish in which a large band killed two soldiers and captured the first mail sent west from San Antonio in October, 1867, prompted Hatch to make further recommendations.\(^ {12}\) He suggested reopening Howard Springs, which had been silted in by floodwaters earlier. It provided the only water on the eighty-six mile stretch between the head of Devil's River and Fort Lancaster on the Pecos. Presumably, Hatch wanted to place a garrison there to deny that water to Indians.\(^ {13}\) His proposal prefigured a strategy used with great effectiveness by Colonel Benjamin Grierson more than ten years later in far West Texas.

In addition, Hatch proposed turning Fort Davis into an infantry post because he thought its mountainous location favored the use of foot soldiers over mounted troops. Lancaster, Stockton, and Quitman, he believed, were the most important posts on the line. Lancaster's importance lay in its location at a point where engineers were bridging the Pecos and in its ability to provide escorts for travellers. Stockton, as previously indicated, held a key position at
the intersection of a number of roads and trails. Quitman stood in an area that Hatch considered one of the most dangerous, and thus one of the most crucial, on the frontier.\textsuperscript{14}

Fort Stockton's location continued to prove extremely valuable in succeeding years. Lieutenant Colonel Wesley Merritt, commanding the post after Hatch's departure, emphasized its success in interdicting Indian war parties attempting to pass through the region and in providing protection for cattlemen driving herds to New Mexico and for other travellers.\textsuperscript{15}

Much of the fort's effectiveness, however, lay in the work of its outposts. Without them, Fort Stockton would have faced an impossible task in attempting to cover the huge area under its jurisdiction. Subposts at Fort Lancaster and Camp Santa Rosa, along with smaller stations at Escondido Springs, Howard's Well, and other locations, extended the control and protection of the main fort to many vulnerable, outlying points.

The first attempt at extending the fort's power began on July 30, 1867, when Lieutenant Fred Smith, Ninth Cavalry, received orders to proceed from Fort Stockton to what remained of old Fort Lancaster seventy miles east near the Pecos River. Smith and his men cleaned up and repaired the old buildings and put them in defensible condition. They
remained at the old fort several days until a force from Camp Hudson to the east relieved them.  

A steep bluff towered over Fort Lancaster. An old road from the plateau above led down to the fort around huge boulders littering the face of the bluff. Horses could scarcely descend the rugged trail. The fort stood on the east bank of Live Oak Creek, four miles from where the main road crossed the Pecos.

Detachments scouting out of Fort Stockton crisscrossed the country around Lancaster during the following months. In late December, Captain W. F. Frohock, Ninth Cavalry, bivouacked within the ruins of the old fort. After the command had unsaddled and several troops designated as wranglers had taken charge of the horses and mules, a force of several hundred men staged a surprise attack upon the camp. Most of the attackers appeared to be Indians, but a number of white renegades rode with them.

The Indians made a determined assault on the camp from the north and reached the ruins of the old post trader's store before being driven back. Many of the government animals stampeded as the firing increased. The frightened horses helped break up the attack, but they scattered into the countryside outside the camp, where Indians captured most of them. Frohock put his men in a skirmish line and drove the enemy back, but the troops could not get close
enough to recapture the horses, thirty-two of which were lost.\textsuperscript{20}

The attackers tried a coordinated assault from several directions at once in an effort to overrun the camp, but the troops held their ground and repulsed the attacks, killing several Indians.\textsuperscript{21} Frohock lost three men who had been taken by surprise in the initial assault, lassoed, and dragged away to their deaths.\textsuperscript{22}

The road from San Antonio to El Paso, which became a major route for the United States mail in 1867, crossed the Pecos near Fort Lancaster. Indians frequently attacked coaches carrying mail, even if they had military guards. A war party killed Corporal Samuel Wright and Private Eldridge Jones of D Company, Ninth Cavalry, as they rode escort to a mail coach in October, 1867.\textsuperscript{23} The need to protect both individual travellers and the mail led to establishment of a temporary outpost at Lancaster in March, 1868.\textsuperscript{24}

Troops used the site intermittently as a base for scouting and escort operations over the next two years. To supply large bodies of cavalry on extended patrols, quartermasters sometimes hauled rations and forage to the old fort and stored them under guard there.\textsuperscript{25} Detachments out of Fort Stockton made camp in the ruins and sent out patrols that scoured regions around Howard’s Well and along Live Oak Creek. Such an arrangement allowed a company to remain in one vicinity longer and cover it more thoroughly
than if the company operated directly from Stockton or any
other major fort.  

By the end of 1870 several officers believed that Fort
Lancaster should become a permanent subpost. Lieutenant
Colonel James H. Carleton urged Headquarters, Department of
Texas, to station twenty infantry and fifteen cavalry at the
site, to be relieved monthly. The mounted troops could
patrol the main road out to a distance of twenty miles east
and west of the post every ten days. Supplies would pose no
problem, as wood and grass were abundant in the area, and
grain for animals could come from Fort Stockton. The troops
would live in tents until they had time to build huts for
themselves.  

A few months after Carleton’s report, Headquarters,
Department of Texas, decided to establish a permanent
subpost at Fort Lancaster to replace the small picket detail
stationed there at the time. Government transportation
would furnish supplies from Fort Stockton for the company
garrisoning the subpost. A fresh company from Stockton
would relieve troops at Lancaster every thirty days. Tents
would house the troops at the subpost until they could build
huts for themselves. Duties of the company included
patrolling the main road west toward Fort Stockton and east
as far as Howard’s Spring, which was to be visited at least
once per month, and repairing the roadway and all stream
crossings over the same stretch.
Life at the new subpost had even fewer comforts and amenities than a major post such as Stockton. William E. Friedlander received appointment from the Secretary of War as official post trader in August of 1871. He supplied canned goods, tobacco, and other small luxuries to troops for a hefty price. The commanding officer at Fort Stockton also made arrangements to assign an acting assistant surgeon to Fort Lancaster. Soldiers at the subpost faced health risks typical of the frontier, risks often stemming from poor diet. Scurvy posed a particular threat, especially in the winter months when fresh vegetables and fruits were nonexistent. One soldier had died of the ailment at Lancaster when it had been just a temporary camp. On November 30, 1871, Private William Lewis, Ninth Cavalry, died in the post hospital of an intestinal disorder.

Troops at Lancaster found indications of increased Indian activity in the area as winter approached. Soldiers discovered a trail left by two Indians on December 8. The next day a two-man patrol bound for Camp Melvin with mail exchanged gunfire with four Indians on the road, and the following day a party of mounted Indians appeared on the Stockton road. Patrols went out regularly toward Howard's Well, Camp Hudson, and other points to counter these threats, but the garrison had too few men to scout as vigorously as Captain Louis Johnson, in command of the
subpost, desired. He requested four additional cavalrymen or at least four saddle horses on which to mount his infantrymen. He preferred cavalry because they were armed with revolvers, weapons not furnished to foot soldiers but valuable for fighting on horseback.\(^3\)3

Rather than receiving more men, however, Fort Lancaster faced an imminent decrease in its troop strength. Wanting to free more men for scouting and garrison duty at Fort Stockton, Lieutenant Colonel Wesley Merritt recommended that the force at Lancaster be permanently reduced to twelve infantrymen and six or eight cavalry. He believed this number to be adequate for the patrol and escort duty required of the post.\(^3\)4 On January 2, 1872, the commanding officer of Fort Stockton ordered G Company, Twenty-fourth Infantry Regiment, to return from Lancaster, leaving one non-commissioned officer and three privates at the subpost along with a small detachment of cavalry. Supplies and forage remained at Lancaster to be used later by commands operating in the area and by the garrison left behind. The commanding officer of G Company had the option of leaving two or more saddle horses with his detail for use at the subpost.\(^3\)5

The steady decrease in Lancaster's garrison illustrated a trend toward small detachments for outposts all over the Texas frontier. Given the limited troop strength available for duty at virtually every major fort, commanders had to
choose between abandoning most of their outposts in order to garrison one or two with a large number of men, and manning a number of points with a handful of men at each. They invariably chose the latter course, desiring to retain control over the maximum number of locations, even though that choice meant spreading their strength thinly. Actually, small garrisons usually proved sufficient to discourage raids on a particular location. Indians in Texas almost always travelled in parties of no more than forty or fifty, often fewer. A handful of troops, seasoned and well led, sufficed in almost every instance to deter or even pursue any war party they encountered.

Small details continued to use Fort Lancaster for routine scouting and escort duty and as a supply station at various times over the remainder of the decade. The last major period of activity at the post occurred in 1879. By that time Comanche, Kiowa, and Kickapoo raiders no longer troubled the frontier, but small bands of Apaches still posed a significant threat to the region.

In the spring of 1879, Colonel W. R. Shafter used Fort Lancaster as a base for scouting columns that crisscrossed the area in search of Apache bands. Lancaster served as supply depot for the large amounts of forage required by 125 horses and mules operating out of that post. A company of cavalry from Fort Duncan at Eagle Pass reinforced the troops already using Lancaster in April. The commander of
the District of the Nueces planned to replace that company with a detachment of Seminole Negro Indian scouts under Lieutenant John L. Bullis.  

The Seminole Negro Indian scouts descended from original Seminole Indians and runaway slaves living with the tribe, removed from Florida to Indian Territory in the 1830s. A portion of the tribe split off and settled in Mexico but later crossed the border and made their home in southern Texas. The army used these Seminole Negro scouts extensively in its campaigns in that region of the frontier, and they proved to be expert scouts and courageous fighters. Lieutenant Bullis led them for a number of years and showed himself to be a brave and intelligent officer.

Instead of Bullis and his scouts, however, Lieutenant Mason Maxon and a detachment under his command relieved the company from Fort Duncan. They used Fort Lancaster as a base for scouting in the direction of Camp Peña Blanca.

Frequent patrols in the area yielded no further sign of Indians during the spring. The center of Apache activity eventually shifted to the country farther west and never returned to Fort Lancaster's vicinity. Its importance as a base for scouting operations and as supply point declined sharply, and the army used it thereafter only on rare occasions.

Troops from Fort Stockton established another outpost in July 1868, at Escondido Springs, sometimes referred to as
Tunas Springs. Stockton relieved the unit at Escondido Springs with a fresh detachment every thirty days. Military authorities chose to garrison the site because the mail route from the east shifted its crossing point on the Pecos southward, from Horsehead Crossing to Camp Melvin, also known as Pecos Station. The route then continued west through Escondido Springs to Fort Stockton. The springs lay along the old mail road between San Antonio and San Diego, about twenty-five miles east of Fort Stockton.

In a medical inspection during September, Acting Assistant Surgeon Rudolfo Gausetsky found the men at Escondido Springs comfortably quartered in tents pitched around the inner side of a stone wall enclosure. Their field kitchen turned out adequate meals, rations occasionally being supplemented by fresh beef. The springs furnished plenty of good, clear water. Abundant mesquite trees provided firewood. Gausetsky noticed problems only in a shortage of adequate clothing for the coming winter, and low morale because of boredom and the absence of a commissioned officer to maintain discipline.

Transfer of two companies of the Ninth Cavalry from Fort Stockton to Fort Concho in early 1869 caused reduction of the garrison at Escondido Springs. Only five men guarded the mail station and springs after that change. A detail now served two months at the post before being relieved.
Troops at a picket station such as Escondido Springs guarded the mail station buildings and livestock and provided a one-man escort to ride most stagecoaches to the next point on the route. The small number of soldiers usually proved effective in deterring major attacks on their station, if not quick raids to run off horses and mules. Of course, the tiny garrisons did not discourage every attack, and the presence of a single soldier on a stagecoach could not prevent a determined war party from taking a stage. The troops did, however, raise the ante enough to make most war parties leave the guarded station or stagecoach in favor of easier prey. Indians in Texas could exhibit extreme courage, but they seldom cared to press home an attack in the face of vigorous return fire.

Eventually infantrymen replaced cavalry troopers at Escondido Springs. Wagons from Fort Stockton regularly carried the men sent to relieve garrisons at the springs and other stations on the mail road. The road remained in good condition in the vicinity of the post, and the springs supplied plenty of good water. The once abundant wood, however, grew scarce by 1874, apparently from constant use for the fires of men stationed there.

When Apache troubles increased in the area in 1878, troops at Escondido Springs faced more frequent action. A band of Indians killed one civilian mail rider near the post and captured the mail before chasing a second civilian to
the station. The small detachment there could not pursue the attackers, but troops from Fort Stockton did.\textsuperscript{47}

Increased Indian activity prompted reinforcement of the detachment at Escondido Springs. Twelve infantrymen and five cavalrymen garrisoned the post by the summer of 1879. The men came prepared for a long, dangerous campaign, as indicated by their larger than normal ammunition issue of one hundred rounds per man and rations for four months.\textsuperscript{48} As well as guarding the mail and the road, the detachment sent out small patrols covering the area east of the post.\textsuperscript{49}

By the end of the following year, army units west of Fort Stockton had put an end to organized Apache raiding. The military used Escondido Springs as a patrol base only sporadically after that time. In early 1883 Captain George Armes led a column of forty-two men out of Fort Stockton to pursue a war party reported in the vicinity of Escondido Springs but found no Indians during the ten days he scouted the region.\textsuperscript{50} Following the Armes patrol the army had little need for Escondido Springs, and the post fell into disuse.

Camp Santa Rosa, also identified at times by military authorities as Frazier's Ranch, stood three miles west of Frazier's Crossing on the Pecos, just downstream from Pecos Falls and served as another of Fort Stockton's outposts. The surrounding country contained little except mesquite and
sparse grass, but a good road ran from Fort Stockton past the camp to Frazier's Crossing. The crossing itself could prove treacherous at times because the banks on each side rose steeply from the riverbed.\textsuperscript{51}

Troops from Fort Stockton used Camp Santa Rosa, twenty-six miles away, as a camping spot for patrols as early as 1874.\textsuperscript{52} The heaviest activity at the camp, however, occurred in 1879. During that year of increased Apache raiding, Camp Santa Rosa became one of the primary bases for patrols scouring the region in search of small bands of Indians. In June, an entire company of troops occupied the camp and scouted the area in all directions.\textsuperscript{53}

Camp Santa Rosa became an official subpost of Fort Stockton during this period, by order of the Commanding Officer, District of the Pecos. Troops at the camp had responsibility for forcing hostile Indians from that part of the district and keeping them out, thus protecting the mail route and settlements. In carrying out these responsibilities, cavalry units at the camp logged over 1000 miles per month on patrols.\textsuperscript{54}

Captain George Armes commanded Camp Santa Rosa and his cavalry company there in the early summer of 1879. He often had two or three patrols out at one time looking for hostile Indians. Non-commissioned officers commanded the smaller patrols, while Armes or one of his lieutenants, such as Calvin Esterly, led those of a dozen men or more. Some
patrols travelled hundreds of miles in their search for Indian sign.\textsuperscript{55}

More often than not, army patrols out of Camp Santa Rosa saw no Indians. Occasionally, however, they did make contact. Lieutenant John McMartin, Twenty-fifth Infantry Regiment, led twenty-one enlisted men of B Company, Tenth Cavalry, and a civilian guide along the Pecos out of the subpost in late July. Coming across fresh signs of Indian raiders, McMartin began pursuit, aided by three local cowboys who agreed to serve as scouts for the patrol. On August 16, the troops caught sight of a mounted party of Indians in the distance and gave chase. After twenty miles of rapid pursuit, McMartin reined in his horses and stopped the chase, knowing he could not catch the band at that time. He did not return to camp, however, but headed west for the Fort Stanton reservation in New Mexico, on the assumption that the Indians were bound for that point. Reaching that location and not finding the party, McMartin rested his command three days then marched back to Camp Santa Rosa. His patrol had lasted over a month.\textsuperscript{55}

Patrols virtually anywhere on the Texas frontier between 1866 and 1886 followed a pattern very similar to those originating from Camp Santa Rosa. Although there were occasional exceptions, such as McMartin's scout, very few columns ever caught sight of Indians, and not many even found fresh sign. Men and horses seldom had enough water.
Fatigue, worse than usual food, and bad weather wore down troopers as well as their mounts. Despite difficulties, some men actually liked patrols because they provided a break from the awful monotony of garrison routine. More important than their effect on soldiers, however, patrols did serve an essential purpose. They placed a military force in the field where it had at least a chance of finding and engaging hostile raiders. Although the odds of doing so were poor, they remained better than if the unit stayed at its post. In addition, scouting hardened soldiers and their mounts and provided training for those rare occasions when the troops actually came to grips with their enemy.

Morale at Camp Santa Rosa suffered during those hot summer months of 1879, not only because of the difficulties of frequent patrols but also because of the strictness of Captain Armes. The captain sent an ambulance from Fort Stockton back to that fort empty, after it had journeyed to his subpost to pick up sick men. Armes believed those men supposed to return to Stockton for medical care were actually shirkers, and he kept them on duty. He even requested ten additional soldiers, infantrymen, be sent to him to guard the camp and free more of his cavalrymen for patrol.  

Some of Armes's men went to extremes in their dislike of their company commander. Sergeant Frank Lewis, leading a detachment and wagon from Fort Stockton back to Camp Santa
Rosa on the night of June 12, left his men and returned to Stockton. He told them he had left his pistol at the fort and was returning to retrieve it. According to Armes's report, when the sergeant reached Fort Stockton, however, he attempted to break into the house occupied by the Armes family and tried to kill one of their servants. Then he fled the post and rejoined his detachment at dawn. No record exists of any disciplinary action against Lewis for the alleged assault.58

A number of other officers, including some of his superiors, thought Armes was a poor officer and unreasonably hard on his men. Orders came from the Department of Texas to inform him that a medical officer, rather than Armes, was to make decisions as to the physical health of men in the command.59 Armes tried to regain the initiative in this situation by cancelling the contract of a civilian physician, Dr. M. F. Price, serving temporarily at Camp Santa Rosa, but the Department of Texas ordered Armes to reinstate Price.60

With the shift in most Indian activity to the west, Camp Santa Rosa became unimportant as a base for patrols. Its use declined dramatically after the fall of 1879.

Several other points held small garrisons for limited periods in the region around Fort Stockton. These included Howard's Well, Castle Mountain, Wild China Ponds, and several camps along the Pecos.
Howard’s Well, located a few miles southwest of Fort Lancaster, served on occasion as a depot for forage and supplies or as base for a small detail. In March 1872 quartermaster wagons with a detachment commanded by Captain Louis Johnson deposited 9000 pounds of forage there, to be used for cavalry units conducting extensive scouts in the area. Johnson detailed a sergeant and four privates to remain and guard the forage. Indians stampeded four horses from Johnson’s command while it rested at Howard’s Well before continuing to Fort Clark, costing him valuable time in trying to recover the animals.

A month later two companies of the Ninth Cavalry passing Howard’s Well came upon a burning government freight wagon train. Nine civilian drivers and passengers lay dead at the site. Troops set out after the Indians, who had just ridden away. After a stiff fight eight miles from the scene of the massacre, the soldiers broke off the engagement. Lieutenant F. R. Vincent died later that day from wounds received in the fighting.

A small detachment of Ninth Cavalry troopers under Captain Johnson encamped at Castle Mountain in June 1868. At this location a gap in a range of rugged hills funneled traffic west toward Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos River. Johnson’s troops changed their camp to Wild China Ponds, east of Castle Gap, a short time later. A few days after the move, twenty-five Indians tried to sneak up to the ponds
for water, and Johnson's men drove them off. The water supply proved insufficient for a permanent camp, forcing the detachment to abandon the area.65

Camps along the Pecos occupied intermittently included Horsehead Crossing and Pecos Bridge. Horsehead Crossing lay just west of Castle Gap. Pecos Bridge stood in the vicinity of Fort Lancaster.

With such a large series of outposts, Fort Stockton extended its control over a wide area and helped in pacification of a particularly vulnerable portion of the Texas frontier. Still, the army at Stockton and every other frontier post labored under circumstances that made their outposts no more than partially effective in protecting settlers and travellers in their region. The combination of a huge land area, a multitude of potential targets, a limited number of troops, communications no faster than a galloping horse (at least until the construction of a military telegraph network), and small groups of fast-moving opponents made the military's task almost impossible.

That pattern repeated itself time and again in various areas on the Texas frontier during the two decades after the Civil War. The factors mentioned above placed the initiative firmly in the hands of the raiders and forced the army into a reactive posture. Commanders tried to regain the initiative, primarily through constant patrols, but
their success rate in catching or even seeing Indians proved disappointing.
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44. James Wade to C. E. Morse, June 16, 1869, HRFS.

45. Post Adjutant, Fort Stockton, to Commanding Officer, K
Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry Regiment, November 8, 1873,
HRFS.

46. Lieutenant Thomas Davenport, "Journal of the March of a
Detachment of Company M, Ninth Cavalry, from Fort Stockton
to Independence Creek," February 1874, HRFS.

47. Charles Gallagher to Commanding Officer, Fort Stockton,
April 15, 1878, HRFS; B. H. Grierson to Commanding Officer,
Fort Stockton, telegram, April 15, 1878, HRFS.

48. Robert G. Smither to Commanding Officer, Fort Stockton,
July 25, 1879. HRFS.
49. John Wright to Adjutant, Fort Stockton, August 24, 1879, HRFS.


51. "Scout of Detachment of Company M, Ninth Cavalry" March 1874, HRFS.

52. Ibid.

53. Robert Smither to Commanding Officer, Fort Stockton, telegram, June 4, 1879, HRFS.


55. Calvin Esterly to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Pecos, September 10, 1879, HRFS.

56. John Bigelow to Adjutant General, Department of Texas, December 9, 1879, HRFS.

57. George Armes to Adjutant, Fort Stockton, June 5, 1879, HRFS.

58. Ibid., June 16, 1879, HRFS.

59. T. M. Vincent to Commanding Officer, Fort Stockton, June 14, 1879, HRFS.

60. Ibid., June 21, 1879, HRFS.

61. Wesley Merritt to Louis Johnson, March 19, 1872, HRFS.

62. Louis Johnson to Post Adjutant, Fort Stockton, March 26, 1872, HRFS.

63. Ninth Cavalry Regimental Returns, April 1872.

64. Ira Trask to Louis Johnson, June 4, 1868, HRFS.

65. Louis Johnson to Ira Trask, June 14, 1868, HRFS.
CHAPTER 3

FORT CLARK AND ITS OUTPOSTS

Fort Clark, near the town of Brackettville, served as the pivot point between the line of forts protecting the lower Rio Grande frontier zone; the arc running north and east through Fort McKavett and the post-Civil War posts of Concho, Griffin, and Richardson; and the series of trans-Pecos forts from Stockton westward. As such, it faced danger from three directions.

Northward lay scattered settlements, which often attracted long-range Comanche and Kiowa raiding parties from beyond the Red River. Troops at Fort Clark also kept their eyes trained westward on Apache bands that preyed on mail stages and solitary travellers. Finally, two enemies threatened from south of the Rio Grande, Mexican marauders and Kickapoo warriors. Fort Clark’s garrison battled each of these enemies at various times during the period from the end of the Civil War to the mid-1880s.

Realizing Fort Clark’s important location, the army reoccupied it at the end of 1866.1 Fourth Cavalry troopers garrisoned the post during the early months, but companies from the Ninth Cavalry soon replaced them.2 In addition to
FORT CLARK REGION

- Camp Melvin
- Ft. Lancaster
- Ft. McKavett
- Mayer's Spring
  (Estimated Location)
- Beaver Lake
- Pecan Springs
- San Felipe
- Sycamore Creek
- Ft. Clark
- Camp Wood
- East Fork
- West Fork
- Rio Grande

Figure 5
the cavalry, Fort Clark held troops of the Forty-first Infantry Regiment by 1868.3

Fort Clark also served as home for the army's Seminole-Negro Indian scouts, mentioned previously. In 1870 the government enlisted many as guides and allowed the men to settle their families on government land adjoining the fort. They served for the next eleven years, primarily under the command of Lieutenant John L. Bullis.4

During the years under Bullis, the Seminole-Negroes fought in twenty-six engagements, without the loss of a man. Several of them won Congressional Medals of Honor, and Bullis owed his life to them after one particularly hard fight with Comanches.5

Fort Clark earned a reputation in army circles as an unpleasant post for a tour of duty. The majority of enlisted men at the fort lived in poorly constructed huts and had few opportunities for relaxation except across Las Moras Creek in the village of Brackettville. Officers lived in better housing but found the post lacking in anything beyond the essentials of life.6

Some considered Fort Clark to have a healthy climate, but significant risk of disease existed in the area. Malaria proved particularly dangerous. The fever had to run its course, and doctors could do little more than bathe their patients in the coolest water available whenever their temperatures reached too high a point. Patients that
survived the weeks of fever usually emerged pale and emaciated after the long struggle.  

Fort Clark briefly came into prominence on the frontier in 1873 because it served as the base of operations for Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie in a strike south of the border. Kickapoo warriors had raided Texas settlements in the border counties for several years, killing people and stealing hundreds of head of livestock. Mexico provided not only a home but a sanctuary for the raiders, one which United States troops could not violate until 1873.

In that year General Philip Sheridan and Secretary of War W. W. Belknap met with Mackenzie and gave him the dubious honor of striking Kickapoo villages a day's hard ride inside Mexico then returning before Mexican troops or angry Indians could retaliate. When Mackenzie questioned the order and his own responsibility for such a violation of another nation's border, Sheridan assured him that President Grant, himself, assumed responsibility for the move.

The Kickapoo villages that Mackenzie planned to hit stood just across the Rio Sabinas, over sixty miles into the state of Coahuila. Slipping out of Fort Clark, elements of the Fourth Cavalry Regiment travelled a full day and night, and a few hours of the following day before reaching their objective. Immediately officers put their troops into formation and led them at a dead run through the villages. Most of the warriors were raiding elsewhere at the time of
the attack, although a few offered resistance. Troops killed nineteen Indians and captured more than twice that many women and children. The soldiers destroyed the villages, including their stocks of food, then pulled out for the Rio Grande.\textsuperscript{10}

The Fourth Cavalry returned to Fort Clark safely. After the attack, Kickapoo raids seldom seriously bothered Texas settlers again.\textsuperscript{11}

Fort Clark continued as an active post throughout the entire period from 1866 to 1886 and well beyond. During the years when Indians remained a very real threat to the safety of that segment of the Texas frontier, the fort operated a number of subposts and other outposts that extended its protection and its offensive capabilities a great distance in several directions. Fort Hudson, Camp Melvin, Beaver Lake, and Mayer's Spring functioned as subposts of Fort Clark at various times during this period. Additional outposts or picket stations existed at San Felipe; along Devil's River, the Pecos, and the Nueces; and at a number of other points in Fort Clark's geographical area.

Fort Hudson, also referred to as Camp Hudson, stood at the second crossing of Devil's River, on the west bank.\textsuperscript{12} Sixty miles south lay Fort Clark.\textsuperscript{13}

Late in the spring of 1867 advance elements of the Ninth Cavalry occupied Fort Hudson, which had been deserted since the beginning of the Civil War.\textsuperscript{14} After these units
had moved on to other posts, D and G Companies of the same regiment took station at Fort Hudson. Captain John M. Bacon, commanding officer of G Company, also assumed command of the post, with eighty-four enlisted men under him and Lieutenant Francis Dodge of D Company. Dodge served as acting post commissary and quartermaster.\(^{15}\)

The following month the garrison suffered its first casualty when a man from D Company died after an illness. Troop strength increased to ninety-four at the post, however, because a number of men previously on detached service at other locations returned to their companies.\(^{16}\)

In October, D Company lost two enlisted men escorting mail near Fort Lancaster, during an Indian attack. As a result of the attack, the company shifted upriver to Beaver Lake to protect the region better, while G Company remained at Hudson.\(^{17}\)

For a brief period that fall the quartermaster department at the post hired two civilian employees to handle supplies. Such an action indicated a certain degree of independence for the post, as did the assignment of Dr. J. C. Whitehead to Fort Hudson as acting assistant surgeon.\(^{18}\) The following February another civilian, a wheelwright, hired on at the post. The same month several new recruits for G Company arrived from Fort Stockton under charge of Lieutenant Francis Davidson.\(^{19}\)
Events took an unexpected turn in April, however, when orders came in from Headquarters, District of Texas, to transfer the garrison at Fort Hudson to Fort Clark. A handful of men stayed behind to guard the government property at Hudson, but only until it could be removed to Fort Clark.20

The army reactivated Fort Hudson as a subpost three years later. Three officers and fifty-nine enlisted men of the Ninth Cavalry and the Twenty-fifth Infantry reoccupied the post on May 23, 1871. Captain Lemuel Pettie, Twenty-fifth Infantry, assumed command.21

Reactivation of Fort Hudson occurred in the same month that army attention focused on the Texas frontier as a result of the Warren wagon train raid by Kiowa warriors. Indians killed seven teamsters in the attack near old Fort Belknap in the northern part of the state. The war party narrowly missed catching General William T. Sherman at the same location a few hours earlier. Sherman was inspecting the frontier in response to reports, which he believed were exaggerated, that Indians from north of the Red River were decimating settlements in the northwestern Texas frontier zone.

Sherman changed his mind about the seriousness of the Indian menace when he heard firsthand reports of the massacre from survivors who stumbled into Fort Richardson immediately after it occurred.22 The army's heightened
concern in the wake of this incident prompted stronger military action to protect the frontier and may have led to occupation of Fort Hudson and other important points in dangerous areas.

Fresh troops relieved the garrison of Fort Hudson every two months. They saw no sign of Indians in the vicinity through the summer and fall. In the absence of combat, soldiers at the subpost kept busy repairing quarters there and working on the road between Fort Clark and Fort McKavett. Infantry constituted the great majority of the garrison at Fort Hudson, but a few Ninth Cavalry troopers remained for mounted scouting duty. By the end of the year, two cavalrmen still served there as messengers, along with the infantry detachment. Finally, on February 21, 1872, the army abandoned Fort Hudson once again. Although troops there had had no contact with hostile Indians during the preceding months, they had completed work on a long stretch of the road from Fort Clark.

Such road building occupied soldiers on the Texas frontier almost as much as more purely military duties. Military road construction consisted of finding the most favorable natural route from one location to another and then making it more passable at certain difficult points such as hills and stream crossings. Troops used blasting powder or sometimes merely picks and shovels to carve easier paths over rocky hills, and they rooted out persistent scrub
cedar, mesquite, and prickly pear from the tracks that army wagons would have to follow. Where the route led across a river or creek, men often had to cut down the banks to make an easy grade down to the water and up the other side. Along hillsides they sometimes built stone retaining walls on the inside edge of the roadway to prevent slides or washouts. Soldiers at outposts in the southwestern part of the state did more than their share of road building, probably because those outposts offered reliable shelter from the elements while the troops spent weeks or months on their construction project.

Fort Hudson saw occasional use after its abandonment. At times it served as a convenient supply depot for forage used by government animals in units operating nearby. In other instances, troops used it as a staging area for further operations. Colonel W. R. Shafter, operating against Mexican Indians in the spring and summer of 1876, camped with his command at Fort Hudson for a short period before moving to the Pecos and eventually into Mexico after those Indians. During the campaign his men opened a wagon road between Hudson and the Rio Grande. Other than for such brief periods of use, Fort Hudson no longer served as a military post.

Although far beyond Fort Hudson from Fort Clark, Camp Melvin also served as a subpost in Clark's area of responsibility and a picket station on the stage route west,
beginning in the late 1860s. It stood on the Pecos River, fifty-five miles east of Fort Stockton. The site bore a great number of names over many years, but Pecos Station and Camp Melvin were the most frequently used. Stagecoaches used the Pecos River crossing at Camp Melvin from 1868 to 1881, and much of the post's importance stems from that use.

On July 1, 1868, Colonel Edward Hatch, commanding the Ninth Cavalry, ordered Captain George Gamble to change the mail route between Fort Stockton and San Antonio. The route had forded the Pecos at Horsehead Crossing opposite Castle Gap, but Hatch wanted the crossing shifted south to Pecos Station. He ordered a company of his regiment to that point with instructions to make a suitable crossing. The work involved cutting down steep banks so that a wagon could safely descend to the river and make it up the other side. Gamble entrusted the assignment to Lieutenant Robert Neely and troops of the Forty-first Infantry.

Neely's A Company at Camp Melvin enjoyed a healthy climate and location. They slept in common tents. A hospital steward cared for their minor medical needs, which included nothing more serious than applying bandages and dispensing a few medicines. Dr. Rudolfo Gausetsky, an acting assistant surgeon, found slight symptoms of scurvy in one man during a medical inspection of the camp in the fall, but nothing that warranted major treatment. He recommended
that no doctor be assigned to Camp Melvin because no medical facilities or equipment existed there yet and because the garrison showed no indication of need for a physician. For cases too serious for the hospital steward to treat, a wagon could transport the patients to Fort Stockton.  

In addition to guarding the crossing and cutting down the banks for wagons, the company established a ten-man outpost on the mail route ten miles east of camp. Heavy work on the banks at the crossing fatigued animals as well as men, and Fort Stockton had to send additional forage for the company's mules.  

By the following summer most of the troops had transferred to other locations, a detail of just eight men remaining at Camp Melvin, primarily as guards for the mail route and stage station. Fresh troops relieved the detail every sixty days. No Indians had attacked that section of the mail line since its establishment.  

Although a ferry crossed the river at Camp Melvin, the army made efforts to bridge the Pecos there in late 1869. Major C. M. Terrill recommended such a bridge and provided measurements of possible crossing points. The Pecos averaged approximately forty-six feet in width from the top of one bank to the top of the other. Terrill estimated that a fifty-foot bridge would be sufficient. A bridge already stood near Fort Lancaster. When troops dismantled
it and transported it to Camp Melvin, they found it too short, so they returned it to its original location.\(^{35}\)

Small details of troops guarded the stage station at Camp Melvin throughout the 1870s.\(^{36}\) Occasionally, troops used it for other purposes. In early 1873 a small infantry detachment escorted a survey party on the Texas and Pacific rail line from Camp Melvin to New Mexico.\(^{37}\)

Although earlier attempts to bridge the river at the camp failed, engineers eventually erected a pontoon bridge there. Colonel Benjamin Grierson's command and the post of Fort Davis depended on that bridge as part of their supply line. At one point, it broke loose from the west bank, causing considerable worry on the part of Grierson's staff.\(^{38}\)

During its existence as an active outpost, Camp Melvin usually functioned under the control of Fort Clark. Part of that time, however, it came under Fort Stockton's authority.\(^{39}\) With the passing of the Apache threat in West Texas in the early 1880s, Pecos Station, or Camp Melvin, no longer required the protection of even a small military detail.

A few months before the first troops arrived at Camp Melvin, the army began using a small post at Beaver Lake, where Devil's River and Johnson's Run converge. Lieutenant Francis Dodge and forty-two enlisted men of D Company, Ninth Cavalry, occupied the site in late 1867.\(^{40}\) The camp stood
twenty-three miles north up Devil's River from Fort Hudson.\footnote{41}

In December, Dr. J. C. Whitehead arrived at the camp to serve as acting assistant surgeon.\footnote{42} Dodge, newly promoted to captain, evacuated the camp the following April and marched his troops to Fort Stockton on orders from Headquarters, District of Texas.\footnote{43} By the end of the year, however, soldiers again garrisoned the camp at Beaver Lake.\footnote{44}

In addition to the regular detachment assigned to Beaver Lake, other troops sometimes used the camp for a rendezvous point or staging area. In January 1870, twenty mounted troops with a non-commissioned officer in command met an army major at or near Beaver Lake for a period of intensive patrol.\footnote{45} Three years later Colonel Ranald Mackenzie and a large contingent of cavalry operated in the area near Beaver Lake against hostile Indians. A trader named August Santleben camped with Mackenzie's command at the lake. Santleben's wagon train carrying freight for Mexico left the troops and proceeded less than three miles when approximately forty Indians ambushed the train's advance party. Indians killed two of the men before the train could make it back to the safety of Mackenzie's camp.\footnote{46}

Troops occasionally provided escort to travellers passing Beaver Lake. Captain John Craig and twenty-three
men of G Company, Tenth Infantry, escorted a wagon train from Fort Clark to Beaver Lake in March 1876 during a particularly dangerous period. Like many other outposts, Beaver Lake frequently served as a depot for forage or supplies. Fort Clark provided such supplies and hauled them to the camp for units operating in the area.

Although its use by the army declined after the mid-1870s, Beaver Lake continued to serve on occasion as a camping site for other forces defending the frontier, such as Texas Rangers. In the summer of 1876, a large Ranger force under Major John B. Jones operated against Kickapoo and Lipan Apache warriors along the Pecos. Jones used Beaver Lake as a staging area for his sweep of the region.

For a brief span in the early 1880s the army maintained a camp at Mayer's Spring near the Rio Grande on a road between San Felipe and Peña Colorado. During the summer of 1880, several companies of the Twenty-fourth Infantry marched from Fort Clark to Fort Stockton along this route. They investigated the area near Mayer's Spring for water but found no permanent sources except for the spring itself.

Troops occupied Mayer's Spring at the beginning of 1881, along with several other key points near the Rio Grande. Elements of the First Infantry Regiment garrisoned some of those locations, with A Company holding Mayer's Spring. These units operated against small Apache bands
that slipped back and forth across the Rio Grande to hit undefended ranches and steal livestock.

At the end of April, the infantry left Mayer's Spring, replaced by H Company, Eighth Cavalry. By July two additional companies of that regiment occupied Mayer's Spring and patrolled the region along the border. A month later another company of the Eighth Cavalry left Fort Clark for duty at the spring, along with a detachment of Seminole Negro scouts. Troops operated out of Mayer's Spring for the remainder of the year.

Indian activity in the area diminished by the beginning of 1882 to the point that troops no longer needed to garrison Mayer's Spring. They still passed through or made camp there on occasion. Captain George Armes and a patrol looking for a party of Indians rode through the area in April 1883. By that time many ranchers lived there, and Armes picked up guides from among them as his patrol scouted the mountains. He saw two mounted men, believed to be Indians, at one spot, but could not catch them. Apart from that, his patrol found no recent sign of raiders.

In addition to Mayer's Spring and the other subposts of Fort Clark, several minor camps and stations existed during the period. The fort established one such outpost at Camp Wood during the early 1870s. The camp stood beside the east fork of the Nueces River, ten miles north of the town of Montell. Camp Wood occupied the site of an old Spanish
mission, San Lorenzo de la Santa Cruz. At various times the Texas Rangers maintained a camp there.\textsuperscript{55}

On June 1, 1871, forty-six men of the Twenty-fourth Infantry and fifteen men of the Ninth Cavalry, under Captain H. C. Corbin, Twenty-fourth Infantry, occupied Camp Wood. A fresh infantry company relieved the troops there every month, and command of the post passed to the commanding officer of the new company. Men at Camp Wood saw no serious action but spent most of their time building corrals and stables for the post’s animals and constructing a road from Fort Clark, forty-four miles south, to Fort McKavett, approximately eighty miles north. Camp Wood retained a four-man cavalry detachment for escort and courier duty after most of the cavalry withdrew to other locations. On Christmas Day, 1871, the army abandoned Camp Wood and removed its government property and records to Fort Clark.\textsuperscript{56}

Troops from Fort Clark used an outpost at San Felipe on the Rio Grande for several years in the 1870s and 1880s. The post stood near a series of springs less than two miles from the river along the road from Fort Clark to Peña Colorado.\textsuperscript{57} Between March 1873 and February 1876, units of the Ninth Cavalry operated out of San Felipe on patrol for Mexican cattle thieves and Indians.\textsuperscript{58} When Indian activity increased in the area again in the spring of 1878, troopers from the Fourth Cavalry and Eighth Cavalry used San Felipe
as a base for scouting. Being only twenty-eight miles from Fort Clark, the camp received supplies from the main post easily. Even a section of light artillery helped protect San Felipe briefly, before it returned to Fort Clark. Troops continued to occupy the outpost through the early months of 1881.\textsuperscript{59}

Several outposts under Fort Clark's jurisdiction existed along Devil's River. D Company, Ninth Cavalry, took station twenty-eight miles west of Fort Hudson at the head of Devil's River in November 1867 to protect the mail and locate additional sources of water for troops.\textsuperscript{60} The following January a seven-man detachment under a corporal garrisoned the first crossing of Devil's River.\textsuperscript{61} Like many other small outposts, this one also served as a supply and forage depot for troops scouting in the area. In March 1872, for example, troops deposited three thousand pounds of forage at the crossing and maintained a guard there to protect it.\textsuperscript{62} Another camp on the river held cavalry troopers during the hectic spring of 1878.\textsuperscript{63}

On a more temporary basis, troops from Fort Clark made use of a number of scouting camps over the years. Such camps existed on the Nueces River (1872), at the head of the Sabinal River (1873-77), in Frio Canyon and Sabinal Canyon (1877), on Pinto Creek (1877-79), at the mouth of Sycamore Creek (1878-79), on Texaquila Creek (1878), at Strickland Springs (1878-81), on Las Moras Creek (1878), near Twin
Mountain (1879), at the mouth of the Pecos (1881), and at Del Rio (1881).\(^6\) In addition, troops under Lieutenant John Bullis built a small hut and stockade at Pecan Springs for detachments operating in the area.\(^6\) That post lay close to Devil's River in extremely desolate country.\(^6\)

Such an intricate network of outposts greatly aided Fort Clark in providing protection to the area for which it had responsibility. If that protection often proved inadequate, one could blame a shortage of troops and the skill of Indian opponents rather than arrangement of the defensive posts.

At Fort Clark, as well as other forts on the Texas frontier especially in the southwestern part of the state, a pattern existed in the army's employment of its outposts over the period from 1866 to 1886. For the first ten to twelve years following the Civil War, military commanders adhered to a primarily defensive and rather uncoordinated strategy. Troops at various outposts attempted to protect their own areas individually but seldom worked together in coordinated operations with units from the other outposts in the region.

As the 1870s drew to a close, however, a subtle change in strategy seemed to evolve. Certain commanders began to approach the problem of frontier defense in a more systematic manner. Although the change did not involve a radical departure from all earlier methods, it did introduce
the element of coordination among many units at many different outposts in support of a definite objective. In effect, this new coordination and the corresponding identification of clear military objectives enabled the army to gain the initiative against their opponents and to carry out campaigns that eventually proved effective, rather than remaining with a purely defensive, reactive strategy that vainly attempted to protect a number of isolated and unrelated points.
1. Fort Clark Post Returns, December 1866, RG 94, National Archives (Microfilm M-617, Roll 214).

2. Ibid., March 1867, April 1868.


7. Mrs. Orsemus Bronson Boyd, Cavalry Life in Tent and Field (1894; reprint, with an introduction by Darlis A. Miller, Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 292-93.

8. For a detailed account of the raid against the Kickapoos, see Ernest Wallace, Ranald S. Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier (Lubbock: West Texas Museum Association, 1964), 92-104.

9. Robinson, Frontier Forts, 47.


11. Ibid., 162-63.

12. Mrs. O. L. Shipman, Taming the Big Bend: A History of the Extreme Western Portion of Texas from Fort Clark to El Paso (n.p., 1926), 43.


15. Fort Hudson Post Returns, June 1867, RG 94, National Archives, (Microfilm M617, roll 495).

16. Ibid., July 1867.

17. Ninth Cavalry Regimental Returns, October-November 1867, RG 94, National Archives (Microfilm M744, roll 87).

18. Fort Hudson Post Returns, October-December 1867.

19. Ibid., February 1868.

20. Fort Clark Post Returns, April 1868.

21. Ibid., May 1871.


23. Fort Clark Post Returns, June 1871—January 1872.

24. Ibid., February 1872.


27. James Wade to C. E. Morse, June 16, 1869, HRFS.


29. Edward Hatch to George Gamble, July 1, 1868, HRFS.

30. Ira Trask to Robert Neely, August 31, 1868, HRFS.

31. Rudolfo Gausetsky to E. Dimmick, October 1, 1868, HRFS.

32. S. E. Armstrong to E. D. Dimmick, October 10, 1868, HRFS.
33. James Wade to C. E. Morse, June 16, 1869, HRFS.
34. E. D. Judd to H. C. Wood, November 11, 1869, HRFS.
35. Ramsey, "Camp Melvin," 139.
36. Ibid., 141-44.
37. L. E. Edwards to Commandant [sic] of Fort Stockton, March 22, 1873, HRFS.
38. Robert G. Smither to Commanding Officer, Fort Stockton, August 16, 1880, HRFS.
39. Post Adjutant, Fort Stockton, to Commanding Officer, K Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry Regiment, November 8, 1873, HRFS.
40. Ninth Cavalry Regimental Returns, November 1867.
41. Shipman, Taming the Big Bend, 43.
42. Fort Hudson Post Returns, December 1867.
43. Ninth Cavalry Regimental Returns, April 1868.
44. Ibid., December 1868.
45. John Loud to Commanding Officer, Fort Stockton, January 10, 1870, HRFS.
46. Shipman, Taming the Big Bend, 46-47.
47. Fort Clark Post Returns, March 1876.
48. J. H. Taylor to Commanding Officer, Fort Stockton, March 23, 1876, HRFS.
50. R. F. O'Beice to Adjutant General, Department of Texas, July 11, 1880, HRFS.
51. Fort Clark Post Returns, February 1881.
52. Ibid., April-July 1881.
53. Ibid., August-December 1881.


56. Fort Clark Post Returns, May-December 1871.

57. R. F. O'Beice to Adjutant General, Department of Texas, July 11, 1880, HRFS.

58. Fort Clark Post Returns, March 1873-February 1876.

59. Ibid., May 1878-February 1881.

60. Fort Hudson Post Returns, November 1867.

61. Ibid., January 1868.

62. Wesley Merritt to Louis Johnson, March 19, 1872, HRFS.

63. Fort Clark Post Returns, May 1878.

64. Ibid., September 1872-December 1881.

65. Special Orders No. 21, Fort McKavett, February 1, 1872, Fort McKavett Post Records, Record Group 393, National Archives (microfilm in possession of Texas Tech University).

 CHAPTER 4

FORT MCKAVETT AND ITS OUTPOSTS

On the south bank of the San Saba River, 110 miles north of Fort Clark and 160 miles east of Fort Stockton, sat Fort McKavett, another of the pre-Civil War frontier posts. Like Fort Clark, McKavett defended a region threatened by raiding Indians from north, south, and west. In addition, troops at the fort had to deal with recalcitrant citizens who resented changes wrought by the Civil War.

Responding to urgent requests from settlers on the frontier and from officials in the Texas government, United States troops reoccupied Fort McKavett in early 1868. On April 1, A Company, Fourth Cavalry, under Captain E. B. Beaumont, rode into the fort and established camp. The post stood in virtual ruins, the buildings so dilapidated that the unit had to live in tents.¹

Another company of the Fourth Cavalry and three companies from the Thirty-eighth Infantry arrived later that month, giving the garrison plenty of men for construction work.² Using stone for the buildings proved impractical, so the troops began cutting cedar pickets. A detail under Lieutenant Peter Boehm established camp near old Fort
FORT MCKAVETT AND RELATED POSTS

- Ft. Concho
- Kickapoo Springs
- Ft. McKavett
- Ft. Terrett
- Mayner's Creek
- Ft. Mason
- Ft. Clark

Figure 6
Terrett for that purpose, and by late summer was cutting 200 pickets per day. Captain Beaumont estimated that three weeks at such a rate would provide all the pickets necessary to rebuild the fort. The reconstruction effort continued into 1869.

Military operations out of Fort McKavett consisted primarily of scouting after hostile Indians. On many occasions troops would respond to a report of Indians raiding in a certain vicinity and launch a pursuit. Very few of these efforts met with success. At other times patrols rode out of the fort on random searches in areas where Indian activity had been heavy in the past. Again, success eluded most of the patrols.

Fort McKavett also provided support and additional troops for expeditions from posts closer to the home ground of raiding Indians. Sometimes during this post-Civil War period officers at McKavett found the post stripped of so many troops in support of remote campaigns elsewhere in the state that they had too few left to protect their own region adequately. Colonel H. B. Clitz, Tenth Infantry Regiment, found himself in this situation in late 1875. Two companies would have allowed him to maintain continual patrols along both the San Antonio road and the road between old forts Terrett and Mason, effectively guarding the main routes that Indians would take in trying to slip into the settlements from either north, south, or west. Because he had only one
company available at the fort for operations, however, Clitz had to hold them there to be ready to send them wherever Indian danger might materialize.\textsuperscript{5}

By the mid-1870s Fort McKavett no longer faced a significant Indian threat in its own vicinity. Troops had forced Comanche and Kiowa warriors onto reservations north of the Red River. To the south, soldiers had blunted the threat from Indians across the Rio Grande to such an extent that raids no longer penetrated as far as the McKavett area. Apaches to the west and southwest still raided settlements and attacked travellers, but again, they no longer struck as far into the heart of the state as Fort McKavett.\textsuperscript{6} The fort still provided troops for the continuing struggle against those Apaches through 1881, but danger in its own area of responsibility had come to an end. The last scout for hostile Indians left the fort in March 1880.\textsuperscript{7}

Fort McKavett operated a number of subposts and picket stations in its region during the period from 1868 to 1878. Its troops garrisoned old Fort Terrett and Fort Mason at times or maintained camps nearby. In addition they established stations or camps at Kickapoo Springs, Mayner's Creek, Splitgarber's Ranch, and various other sites.

Two locations called Kickapoo Springs existed in the vicinity of Fort McKavett. One lay well to the south on the way to Fort Clark. Troops from the latter bivouacked there for brief periods while working on a road between the two
forts in 1872.\textsuperscript{8} The other site of the same name held a place of much greater significance to military operations around Fort McKavett.

That second Kickapoo Springs bisected the route from Fort McKavett to Fort Concho. It occupied a spot about twenty miles north of McKavett near the San Antonio-El Paso road.\textsuperscript{9} Troops from the fort garrisoned Kickapoo Springs periodically from the reoccupation of Fort McKavett in 1868 until 1877.\textsuperscript{10}

The first military detail to occupy Kickapoo Springs consisted of Corporal William Somerz and two privates of the Fourth Cavalry, sent to protect the mail station at the springs. Apparently the men remained at the station for just a few days.\textsuperscript{11}

Colonel Ranald Mackenzie took command at Fort McKavett in early 1869 and reestablished the picket station at Kickapoo Springs on March 27. He did so on request of Mr. Ben Ficklin, operator of an extensive stage line that passed through the location. A long-running argument began at that point between Ficklin and Mackenzie over maintaining a permanent detail at the station.\textsuperscript{12}

Mackenzie withdrew the detachment on May 20, because of a shortage of troops at Fort McKavett caused by the absence of two major scouting parties. Ficklin complained that the United States mail, which passed through Kickapoo Springs, needed military protection.\textsuperscript{13} While Mackenzie was
temporarily absent from Fort McKavett, the Fifth Military District headquarters ordered the station regarrisoned. Captain Henry Carroll, acting post commander at McKavett, complied.\textsuperscript{14}

The situation angered Mackenzie, and he stated his disagreement, in writing, to district headquarters. He did not believe a permanent station at Kickapoo Springs was warranted because troops could occupy the site whenever it was threatened. He also resented Ficklin's actions in principle. As military commander in the immediate area, Mackenzie believed he was best qualified to decide when and how to protect the mail, citizens, and the government's interests.\textsuperscript{15}

Mackenzie kept a detachment at Kickapoo Springs for the time being, but replaced the infantrymen with cavalry. The latter could patrol nearby areas whenever reports of Indian activity reached them, and thus more actively protect the region than foot soldiers. Mackenzie gave strict orders about the care and protection of horses and ensured an adequate guard would be left for the station if the majority of the command left on a pursuit.\textsuperscript{16}

Ficklin continued to pester Mackenzie with requests for more troops to guard the mail and stage line. He went so far as to ask for an entire company of cavalry to cover the stretch between Fort Concho and the head of the Concho River. Mackenzie considered small permanent detachments at
points like Kickapoo Springs detrimental to the army's ability to protect an area. They drained resources of men and horses, hampering a post commander's ability to conduct real offensive operations. Mackenzie thought placement of troops at temporary picket stations could be effective, but he believed offensive patrols and long scouts that penetrated Indians' home ground to be the best tactics. In late August, Mackenzie withdrew the remaining troops from Kickapoo Springs for use in just such an extended scout.

The entire Ficklin-Mackenzie controversy over garrisoning Kickapoo Springs illustrated a common problem faced by the army on the frontier in Texas and elsewhere. Many military officers believed, correctly or incorrectly, that civilians demanded the presence of troops at various locations out of financial motives rather than for protection of life. In most cases those financial motives focused on the army garrison as a potential market for local agricultural produce, which often commanded inflated prices from vegetable-starved troops. In the case of Kickapoo Springs, no such sales motive existed, but Mackenzie still suspected, no doubt correctly, that Ficklin was trying to use the army to protect his business from personal enemies rather than to protect lives and property from marauding Indians.

The November after Mackenzie pulled out the rest of his troops, five men under command of a non-commissioned officer
regarrisoned Kickapoo Springs. The soldiers pitched tents at the station and carried rations for thirty days.¹⁹

At times no troops occupied Kickapoo Springs, but units from Fort McKavett still made frequent patrols in the vicinity. One such patrol under Sergeant Emanuel Stance, Ninth Cavalry, spotted a band of Indians with a horse herd near the springs on May 20, 1870. Stance and his patrol rode for the Indians at a dead run, scattering them and capturing several horses. After camping for the night at Kickapoo Springs, Stance’s patrol started back for Fort McKavett with their captured horses. A short distance along the way they saw a party of Indians preparing to attack a small group of wagons, and Stance again ordered a mounted attack, catching the war party by surprise and taking a few more horses. When the Indians worked around his flank and tried to hit his unit from the rear, Stance and his men used their carbines to good effect and drove the enemy off. For his actions in the fighting at Kickapoo Springs, Sergeant Stance won a Congressional Medal of Honor.²⁰

Stance’s action pointed up the fact that the small detachments of troops typical of outpost and patrol duty in Texas almost always outfought the similarly small bands of Indians they encountered, if the Indians made any fight at all. Most of the time, war parties fled at the first sign of military pursuit. Because they routinely travelled with two or more horses per warrior, Indian bands usually had
little trouble outdistancing cavalry units, with their one horse to one man ratio. Of course the great majority of military patrols resulted in no sign of Indians whatsoever.

Mixed cavalry and infantry detachments usually served at Kickapoo Springs. Troops built necessary structures such as corrals but lived in tents themselves. In addition to guarding the mail by providing escorts to ride stagecoaches between the springs and the next station at Coghlan’s Ranch, soldiers also protected cattle herders in the vicinity. Cavalry at the station mounted small patrols when reports of Indians came in.21

Although troops at Kickapoo Springs protected the area primarily from Indians, on occasion they lent a hand in enforcing the law. In October 1876, the sheriff of Tom Green County and a posse chased two killers into a thicket near Kickapoo Springs. When the posse attempted to go in after them, the outlaws opened fire and killed one of the group. At that point the sheriff asked the military detachment for help. A lengthy gun battle took place, ending finally with the killers shot dead.22

In the summer of 1877, Colonel H. B. Clitz, in command of Fort McKavett, decided that no further need existed to garrison Kickapoo Springs and ordered the detachment there to abandon the station.23

Whereas Kickapoo Springs occupied a strategic location north of Fort McKavett, old Fort Terrett stood to the south.
Before the Civil War, Fort Terrett served as one of the major posts guarding the Texas Hill Country settlements, but after the war it never regained the status of an important post. At various times during the 1870s, however, it held detachments from Fort McKavett.

A few months after troops reactivated McKavett, a detachment from there camped near Fort Terrett to procure cedar pickets for building purposes. Cedar grew abundantly in the area, and the detail cut large numbers of posts. To protect the working party, five enlisted men served as a guard over the camp. Wagons hauled the rough pickets back to Fort McKavett. Fort McKavett continued to take advantage of the cedar brake at the old post for at least another year, sometimes stationing work details there for two weeks at a time.

Old Fort Terrett also served as a scouting camp. Ninth Cavalry troopers under Captain E. M. Heyl used it as a base for supplies and forage when conducting a reconnaissance of the area in the fall of 1869. Wagons from Fort McKavett hauled supplies to the old post, where pack mules waited to carry those supplies on from that point with the patrols.

For a brief period in 1871, Fort Terrett served as a regular subpost of Fort McKavett. During this time the post received a permanent medical officer. Soon, however, the army disestablished the post, and Fort Terrett reverted to use as an occasional camp.
In late 1876 in response to a number of raids in the region, troops again occupied Fort Terrett and used it as a base for scouting against hostile Indians. In addition to such patrols, the command there also cut more cedar poles, provided escort to cattle herders, and hunted for outlaws that had fired on an army paymaster’s detail shortly before.29

Probably the most bizarre assignment of any detachment at old Fort Terrett fell to Captain Henry Carroll and twenty men of the Ninth Cavalry. In addition to conducting a scout of the area, Carroll’s command had to disinter the bodies of all soldiers buried in the old post cemetery, so the quartermaster could haul the remains back to Fort McKavett for reburial there.30

Like Fort Terrett, Fort Mason had functioned as a major post before the Civil War but only housed scattered detachments after the war. Two companies of the Fourth Cavalry reoccupied the fort at the end of 1866 as part of the initial post-war force sent to defend the Texas frontier.31 Located approximately fifty miles east of Fort McKavett, however, Mason stood too far inside the settlement line to serve as a permanent post. The troops there transferred to Fort McKavett when that post returned to active status in early 1868.32

Although Indians raided in the region for several years, some of the most significant action around Fort Mason
concerned white cattle thieves. After the reestablishment of Fort McKavett, that command sent a detachment under Captain G. W. Budd, Ninth Cavalry, to Mason. Budd reported trouble in the vicinity, where certain unknown individuals were killing cattle. Fort McKavett sent eight cavalrmen to help Budd and to relieve the infantry detachment with him. With the mounted troops to aid him, the captain spent the next three weeks investigating the cases and taking affidavits before returning to Fort McKavett.\textsuperscript{33}

Two months later in July 1869, military commanders at Fort McKavett and at Fifth Military District headquarters discussed permanently stationing one company at Fort Mason to deal with continuing problems of murder and cattle theft. Troops from Fort McKavett always arrived too late to do any good when local citizens around Mason called on them for help. Estimates for repairing the old fort to house a company ran between $3000 and $5000, however, and nothing came of the idea.\textsuperscript{34}

At election time the following November, the commanding officer of Fort McKavett detailed Lieutenant W. W. Tyler, Ninth Cavalry, to Fort Mason as a member of the Board of Registrars for Mason County. Ten enlisted men went with Tyler to enforce rules laid down by the Fifth Military District, and the detail remained until after the election.\textsuperscript{35}
After that time Fort Mason served only as a temporary camping place for patrols travelling through the vicinity.

In May 1871, Captain John Clous, Twenty-fourth Infantry, led two other officers, citizen physician Thomas Davis, and sixty-two enlisted men from Fort McKavett to a point where Copperas Creek entered the North Llano River, a few miles east of old Fort Terrett. He established a camp there known as the subpost on the North Llano, or Mayner’s Creek. For the next year fresh troops from Fort McKavett relieved detachments at the subpost monthly. The garrison contained both foot soldiers and mounted troops and varied between thirty and sixty men during most of that period.36

The detachment at Mayner’s Creek decreased to six men in June 1872, probably as a result of a manpower shortage caused by Colonel W. R. Shafter leading an expedition of almost 200 men from Fort McKavett toward the Brazos and Colorado rivers.37 Troops abandoned the post altogether the next month.38

Fort McKavett maintained several other small posts or picket stations in its area at various times. On May 16, 1871, four enlisted men of the Ninth Cavalry established a picket station at Splitgarber’s Ranch, seventeen miles from the fort. This detail guarded the mail station there. Fresh troops relieved the detail monthly.39 The picket station remained active through November.40 Although too small to mount patrols, the four-man garrison fulfilled the
general objective of a picket station, to discourage raids by small bands of Indians on the station and its livestock.

The next January, a detachment under Captain H. C. Corbin occupied a camp at Bear Creek. Troops remained at the camp through April. They spent most of their time working the road between camp and Fort McKavett.

Located as it was between forts Clark, Stockton, and Concho, and farther into the settlements than those outer posts, Fort McKavett provided a measure of defense in depth to the frontier zone in its region. Its outposts contributed to that protection by covering important travel routes and water sources and also imposed a degree of law and order on certain lawless civilians. Also because of that interior position and the larger number of settlers in the area, McKavett's outposts ceased functioning at an earlier average date than those of forts closer to the edge of unsettled territory where the Indian menace remained great.
ENDNOTES


2. Ibid., 28.

3. E. B. Beaumont to J. A. Potter, August 31, 1868, Records of Fort McKavett, Texas, Record Group 393, National Archives (hereafter cited as RFMT) (microfilm in possession of Texas Tech University and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department).


5. H. B. Clitz to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, September 13, 1875, RFMT.


7. Fort McKavett Post Returns, March 1880, Record Group 94, National Archives (Microfilm M-617, Roll 688).


10. Special Orders No. 6, Fort McKavett, April 21, 1868, RFMT; H. B. Clitz to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, July 17, 1877, RFMT.

11. Special Orders No. 6, Fort McKavett, April 21, 1868, RFMT.

12. R. S. Mackenzie to H. Clay Wood, July 14, 1869, RFMT.

13. Ibid.

14. Henry Carroll to C. E. Morse, June 29, 1869, RFMT.

15. R. S. Mackenzie to H. Clay Wood, July 14, 1869, RFMT.

16. Post Adjutant, Fort McKavett, to J. L. Bullis, July 25, 1869, RFMT.

17. R. S. Mackenzie to R. F. Ficklin, August 1, 1869, RFMT.
18. R. S. Mackenzie to H. Clay Wood, August 23, 1869, RFMT.

19. Special Orders No. 123, Fort Mckavett, November 12, 1869, RFMT.


21. Post Adjutant, Fort Mckavett, to H. B. Chamberlain, April 1, 1874, RFMT.

22. Thomas M. Anderson to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, October 22, 1876, RFMT.

23. H. B. Clitz to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, July 17, 1877, RFMT.

24. E. B. Beaumont to J. A. Potter, August 31, 1868, RFMT.

25. Special Orders No. 101, Fort Mckavett, September 29, 1868, RFMT.

26. Special Orders No. 100, Fort Mckavett, September 15, 1869, RFMT.

27. Special Orders No. 128, Fort Mckavett, November 20, 1869, RFMT.

28. H. Clay Wood to Medical Director, Department of Texas, May 27, 1871, Headquarters Records of Fort Stockton, Record Group 393, National Archives (Microfilm M-1189).

29. Post Adjutant, Fort Mckavett, to D. H. Kelton, September 8, 1876, RFMT.

30. Special Orders No. 190, Fort Mckavett, November 13, 1872, RFMT.


32. Fort Mckavett Post Returns, April 1868.

33. Post Adjutant, Fort Mckavett, to G. W. Budd, April 14, 1869, RFMT; Acting Post Adjutant, Fort Mckavett, to W. W. Tyler, May 9, 1869, RFMT.
34. Henry Carroll to C. E. Morse, July 1, 1869, RFMT.

35. Special Orders No. 129, Fort McKavett, November 21, 1869, RFMT.


37. Ibid., June 1872.

38. Ibid., July 1872.

39. Ibid., May 1871.

40. Ibid., November 1871.

41. Ibid., January-April 1872.

42. Special Orders No. 10, Fort McKavett, January 12, 1872, RFMT.
CHAPTER 5

FORTS AND OUTPOSTS OF THE LOWER RIO GRANDE

Southeast of the region covered by forts McKavett, Clark, and Stockton, a line of posts stretched down the lower Rio Grande, from Fort Duncan at Eagle Pass through Fort McIntosh near Laredo and Ringgold Barracks at Rio Grande City, to the mouth of the river. Fort Brown anchored the line at that point. Mexican cattle thieves and other lawless elements of the population across the border constituted the primary danger to this zone of the frontier all the way up to Fort Duncan, where Indians began to replace Mexican outlaws as the main threat.

United States troops returned to Fort Brown immediately after the Civil War to protect that portion of the border, not only from outlaws, but also from incursions by forces of French-supported Emperor Maximilian of Mexico. A succession of units rotated through the post. On occasion they came into conflict with Mexican irregulars or civilians. Late in 1866, two companies of the Fourth Cavalry actually crossed the border into the town of Matamoros during a civil disturbance. The soldiers kept watch over Americans and their property in that town for
SOUTH TEXAS FORTS AND OUTPOSTS

Figure 7
several days before returning to Fort Brown. On their own side of the border, detachments from the fort protected various points in the town of Brownsville, such as the United States customs house. In addition, troops out of Fort Brown conducted regular patrols to combat cattle thieves northwestward along the border.

Fort Brown controlled a number of outposts along the river and at points further into the interior of the state during the period from 1866 to 1886. The post of Brazos Santiago, northeast of Brownsville and directly on the coast, received a small garrison in 1865, and army quartermasters improved the post in early 1867. Detachments continued to occupy it, and in May 1871, when a military hospital moved there, Brazos Santiago became an official subpost of Fort Brown. The hospital came from another small post just disestablished at Point Isabel, a few miles west.

The detachment then at Brazos Santiago consisted of thirteen enlisted men under the command of Lieutenant James Cranston. By the following March, Cranston’s command had decreased to just five men. The post continued in operation for another year, when the army closed it and sent its garrison back to Fort Brown.

In the summer of 1874, a company of the Twenty-fourth Infantry reoccupied Brazos Santiago. In September, however,
the army again withdrew from the subpost, this time permanently.¹⁰

Unsettled conditions in Mexico and a resultant increase in raids along the border led military authorities to order a major increase in cavalry patrols of the region in early 1872.¹¹ As part of this effort, troops established an outpost of Fort Brown at Santa Maria Ranch, thirty miles upriver from the fort, on April 18, 1872. Captain F. E. Lacey and thirty men of the Tenth Infantry under his command had orders to prevent armed groups from crossing into United States territory from Mexico and to arrest individuals north of the river who attempted to enter Mexico in violation of neutrality laws. Lacey's troops remained at Santa Maria only a few days before returning to Fort Brown.¹²

The following October, an unusual amount of activity by cattle thieves near the ranch brought troops back to Santa Maria. Detachments from two other outposts plus a patrol out of Fort Brown converged on the area.¹³ M Company, Fourth Cavalry, operated out of Santa Maria during that winter but returned to Fort Brown in February. The company rode out again almost immediately as escort for a group of United States commissioners conducting an investigation of troubles on the border for the United States Congress.¹⁴

Troops of the Ninth Cavalry continued to scout out of Santa Maria in the following months. In October, the Department of Texas officially charged Fort Brown with
responsibility for protection of the entire stretch of
border between the fort and Santa Maria. The next month, C Company, Ninth Cavalry, changed station from Santa Maria to Roma, a post far upriver and under control of Ringgold Barracks.

In July 1874, a company of the Ninth Cavalry again used Santa Maria as a base for patrols. For a brief period the next summer a detachment of the same regiment operated out of Santa Maria. Beginning in February 1876, companies of the Eighth Cavalry occupied Santa Maria continuously for three and a half years. During a three-month span near the end of that period, Santa Maria functioned as an independent post but reverted to the control of Fort Brown afterward. Finally, in October 1879, the Eighth Cavalry transferred to Fort Clark, leaving Santa Maria ungarrisoned.

When the army remanned Santa Maria the following January, it sent only one officer and twelve enlisted men rather than a full company as in the past. The troops came upriver on the steamboat Andrew Ackley. From that time until the end of 1886, small detachments of as few as five men used the post as a base for patrols along the river.

Troops from Fort Brown also operated from an outpost at Penitas Ranch, eighty-five miles up the Rio Grande. In late June 1872, Captain Robert P. Wilson and forty-seven men of the Tenth Infantry, mounted for scouting purposes, took
station there, with orders to patrol the country between Ringgold Barracks and Edinburg and stop cattle thieves and armed bands from crossing the border. Citizen physician O. J. Eddy rode with the party. The following October, Wilson moved the command to Santa Maria to join other detachments travelling to that point.

Troops returned to Penitas in May 1873. A detachment of nineteen enlisted men of the Ninth Cavalry under the command of a sergeant used the ranch as a base while guarding one of the crossings of the Rio Grande. Other detachments followed at the outpost. Troops from the same regiment returned the next summer to garrison the ranch again, and for the last time.

Increased Indian activity including the murders of nine persons in April 1878, in the vicinity of San Diego, Texas, led the army to place a garrison at that location. San Diego lay 150 miles north northwest of Fort Brown and only 80 miles east of Fort McIntosh, but the post came under the jurisdiction of Fort Brown. Captain A. B. Kauffman, commanding E Company, Eighth Cavalry, occupied San Diego in late summer of 1878. His command logged over 1000 miles in scouts between that time and June 1879. Patrols ranged in all directions after Indians and other marauders reported in the area but never made contact. They also explored possible routes for new wagon roads connecting San Diego with the major posts in the region.
Kauffman's command continued scouting out of San Diego for two more years. During that period Indians made no more trouble in the vicinity, and the troops concentrated their efforts on stopping Mexican raiders and horse thieves but apprehended few, if any, offenders. Nevertheless, the presence of active troops helped bring a greater measure of security and order to the vicinity of San Diego.  

Finally, in September 1881, E Company evacuated the post at San Diego and transferred to Fort McIntosh.  

Troops from Fort Brown temporarily garrisoned several additional posts, primarily for use as scouting camps and bases for guarding river crossings. Those outposts included a camp on the Nueces River (1871), Santa Rosaria (1872), Garcia's Ranch (1873-74), Mezquito Ranch (1873), and El Sauz (1875). In addition, Fort Brown and Ringgold Barracks shared control over a subpost at Edinburg that remained active for several years.  

Troops reoccupied Ringgold Barracks during the same period of late 1865 in which they returned to Fort Brown. The command at Ringgold Barracks engaged in much the same activity as that at Fort Brown, concentrating their efforts on scouting close to the Rio Grande to prevent incursions from across the border and pursuing outlaws or Indians who invaded the region.  

In early 1872 this policy became especially difficult to carry out because of increased revolutionary activity
across the river. Parties of Mexican government troops as well as revolutionaries crossed the Rio Grande repeatedly in January. The next month, Mexicans living in Texas made two raids on the town of Mier in Mexico, harming residents and stealing property both times. Although the army at first left investigation of the attacks on Mier to civil authorities, troops eventually went into action to apprehend some of those responsible for the raids.\(^{30}\)

As a result of the increased potential for trouble in the area, military authorities transferred additional cavalry units to Ringgold Barracks and Fort Brown for a time to allow those posts to cover their stretches of the border more effectively.\(^{31}\) Border troubles grew worse in 1874 and 1875. Reports from reputable sources attributed much of the theft and murder committed by Mexican bands on the American side of the river to leading Mexican citizens and officials who encouraged such activity by providing a ready market for stolen goods and livestock brought across from the north.\(^{32}\)

As late as 1880, General E. O. C. Ord, commanding the Department of Texas, believed a strong force was essential at Ringgold Barracks even though the border had become relatively quiet and safe in the preceding years.\(^{33}\)

Ringgold Barracks maintained several subposts and camps during the period from 1866 to 1886. The most important ones included Edinburg, Roma, and San Ignacio. Edinburg became a subpost of Ringgold Barracks in October 1868, at
the same time as San Ignacio. Both had functioned as independent posts before that time. Edinburg's garrison consisted of forty-six men of I Company, Twenty-sixth Infantry, under Captain Welcome Crafts. A detachment of the company occupied Las Cuevas nearby.  

The following February, I Company abandoned Edinburg and returned to Ringgold Barracks on orders from the Fifth Military District. Troops did not return permanently until May 1873 when G Company, Ninth Cavalry, transferred to the camp. Daniel McLean, a civilian physician, joined the garrison as medical officer. Various companies of the regiment served at Edinburg through August 1875 when the regiment transferred to New Mexico Territory.

Troops at Edinburg engaged in regular small patrols. On one of the few that actually engaged a party of raiders, Sergeant James Randolph and three privates of L Company, Ninth Cavalry, attacked Mexican cattle rustlers near Havana Rancho on the night of November 24, 1874. The patrol captured one man and scattered the remainder of the thieves.

Units of the Eighth Cavalry occupied Edinburg regularly through October 1879, when they abandoned the subpost on orders from the District of the Rio Grande. The following January, a detachment of thirteen men from the regiment regarrisoned Edinburg. From that time through
September 1884, troops operated out of the camp, sometimes in small detachments and sometimes in company strength. The first significant army activity in Roma, a village fifteen miles upriver from Ringgold, occurred in September 1870, when a fourteen-man detachment out of Ringgold Barracks spent five days protecting the United States customs house there. Three years later Roma received a more permanent garrison. At that time, C Company, Ninth Cavalry, rode to Roma from their old station at Santa Maria. The company pulled the normal border duty of scouting and guarding river crossings. It had a medical officer assigned. The following month, however, that doctor left them for the post at Edinburg.

The company at Roma performed extensive scouting in small detachments during the winter. In February alone, patrols rode almost 450 miles. The following year in April, C Company saved the town and the customs house from an attack by forty armed Mexicans returning from a raid on ranches farther into the border counties of the state.

Even larger bands crossed the border in that vicinity at times, threatening to pillage entire towns. In an open letter to the president of the United States, Texas Governor Richard Coke appealed for more military protection along the lower Rio Grande. Secretary of War William Belknap assured the president and Texans in general that he would take immediate steps to protect the area. Shortly after
Belknap made his statement, however, the troops at Roma pulled back to Ringgold Barracks.\textsuperscript{47}

Although soldiers patrolled the area around Roma on occasion, troops did not return for any length of time.\textsuperscript{48} Not until May 1884, did the army again garrison the town. Even then only a detail of nine men occupied Roma, and they stayed just through the summer before evacuating the post permanently.\textsuperscript{49}

Periodically over the span of a decade, units from Ringgold Barracks used the village of Carrizo, often referred to as San Ignacio or Rancho Ignacio, as an outpost. The village stood fifty-eight miles upriver from Rio Grande City. H Company, Twenty-sixth Infantry, first occupied Carrizo in May 1868. The company returned briefly to Ringgold in September, but moved back to Carrizo the next month. At that time, Lieutenant Daniel F. Stiles commanded the twenty-eight man detachment. E. A Spohn, a civilian physician, served with the troops as medical officer. In February 1869, Stiles and his command evacuated the subpost on orders from the Fifth Military District.\textsuperscript{50}

Troops returned to Carrizo in the fall of 1877, when Lieutenant J. M. Thompson led I Company, Twenty-fourth Infantry, plus a medical officer, back to the town.\textsuperscript{51} A detail of the Eighth Cavalry joined the foot soldiers there in April 1878, but Carrizo's days as a permanent outpost were drawing to a close.\textsuperscript{52} In November, the last garrison
of Carrizo, G Company, Twenty-fourth Infantry, under Captain Louis Johnson, withdrew from the post. Although patrols out of Ringgold scouted near the village when reports of Indians came in, no soldiers occupied it again.

In June 1873, Lieutenant Daniel Floyd and troops of B Company, Ninth Cavalry, established an outpost of Ringgold Barracks at the King Ranch. Floyd's twenty men left the King Ranch for El Tule Ranch, ninety miles from Ringgold, in October. The next month, B Company of the same regiment established a scouting camp at Los Conchos near the King Ranch and patrolled the area for cattle thieves until April. The troops crisscrossed the vicinity thoroughly, riding 550 miles on scouts in one month alone. Other companies of the Ninth Cavalry continued to occupy the outpost until September, scouting and, on one occasion, providing aid to the sheriff at Corpus Christi.

Other small posts and picket stations operated under direction of Ringgold Barracks during the mid-1870s. Those included La Pena Ranch, also identified as Salineno (1872-73), El Tule Ranch, previously mentioned (1873), Penitas (1873), Las Puneas (1874), and Las Rucas (1875).

Farther to the northwest up the Rio Grande, the army reactivated Fort McIntosh at Laredo at approximately the same time as Fort Brown and Ringgold Barracks, in mid-1865. Troops from the post actively patrolled the border region both upriver and downriver from Laredo. In the
spring of 1867, troopers from the Fourth Cavalry engaged in long scouts out of McIntosh, each covering well over 200 miles.\textsuperscript{62}

By 1872, military authorities in Texas had begun to consider closing Fort McIntosh. Brigadier General C. C. Augur, commanding the department, thought McIntosh too remote from settlements on the Nueces River that needed protection and believed a subpost at Carrizo would suffice for protecting the immediate Rio Grande area.\textsuperscript{63}

Fort McIntosh remained open, however, and by 1878, troops operating from it engaged in a large amount of scouting.\textsuperscript{64} The following two years saw similar patrol activity by the several companies of troops stationed at the fort.\textsuperscript{65}

Located on a stretch of river having few villages and towns, Fort McIntosh had less need and opportunity for establishing outposts than the forts farther down the river. Troops from McIntosh did use a subpost at Souz’s Ranch during 1878 and 1879. Troops based at the ranch conducted normal patrols along the border looking for Indian or Mexican raiders. They also provided escort to United States customs officials. In April 1879, troops from Souz’s Ranch captured a party of smugglers along the river.\textsuperscript{66}

The next major post on the river, Fort Duncan, served as a junction between Fort McIntosh and those posts farther
FORT DUNCAN & ASSOCIATED LOCATIONS

- Ft. Hudson
- Ft. Clark
- Camp Shafter
- Kickapoo Camps
- Ft. Duncan
- Unnamed Scouting Camp
- Ft. McIntosh

Figure 8
down the Rio Grande on one side, and Fort Clark on the other. In many ways Duncan had a closer connection to Clark than to those other forts, because troops from Duncan and Clark often operated against the same enemies, and those enemies were Indians rather than Mexican cattle thieves.

Unlike the other three forts of the lower Rio Grande, Fort Duncan did not become an active post again after the Civil War until 1868. On March 23 of that year, I Company, First Infantry, occupied the fort. The command consisted of three commissioned officers and forty-eight enlisted men. The troops found the post in bad condition, buildings stripped of doors and windows and no portable property of any value remaining.

In April, Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Shafter assumed command of Fort Duncan. The garrison increased to over 180 officers and men with the addition of companies from the Forty-first Infantry, which was Shafter's regiment, and the Ninth Cavalry. The post's effectiveness for scouting and escort duty declined over the summer, however, because a majority of the cavalry horses became unserviceable and were not replaced.

Fort Duncan received a boost to its combat strength in the summer of 1870 when the first Seminole Negro scouts, mentioned previously, crossed the border from Mexico and enlisted at the fort. More came in over the next three years, and some of those remained at Duncan, although most
went to Clark.\textsuperscript{70} Fort Duncan served as one of the staging areas for Colonel Ranald Mackenzie's attack on the Kickapoo villages in Mexico in May 1873, the Seminole Negroes guiding the cavalry columns to their targets below the border.\textsuperscript{71}

The primary duty of units at Fort Duncan at most times consisted of scouting. Many of those patrols covered vast distances of the arid countryside along the border. Occasionally, troops from the fort participated in larger expeditions that kept them away for months at a time. One such undertaking took two companies of the Twenty-fourth Infantry and a detachment of Seminole scouts away for six months on a 2000-mile scout to the northwest.\textsuperscript{72}

Despite such expeditions and constant smaller patrols, Indian danger in the region near Fort Duncan remained strong in the late 1870s. Certain villages and towns well across the border in Mexico carried on a profitable trade in stolen American livestock with Indians living there. Those towns feared punitive raids by Mackenzie or other commanders, and some Texas citizens called for just such attacks to end the danger in the border region.\textsuperscript{73}

Other thrusts into Mexico did occur, but troops from Fort Duncan engaged in road building much more than they did in combat, especially after 1879.\textsuperscript{74} Duncan's importance declined rapidly after that, and the army abandoned the fort in August 1883. In April 1886, Fort Clark established a subpost on the site of Fort Duncan for maintaining order
along the Rio Grande and protecting citizens from Mexican raiders and extremists.\textsuperscript{75}

During the period after the Civil War, Fort Duncan operated a handful of outposts, the most significant of which was Camp Shafter, also known as Camp San Pedro Springs. Troops from the fort had scouted frequently in the vicinity of the Cariza and Pendencia ranches in early 1872, but in May of the following year, over 120 men from two companies of the Fourth Cavalry established an outpost there. The camp stood about twenty-five miles up the Rio Grande from Fort Duncan. Seminole scouts acted as couriers between the camp and forts Duncan and Clark.\textsuperscript{76}

Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Shafter established the camp to protect the border from an expected raid by Kickapoos and Lipan Apaches in retaliation for Mackenzie's recent attack on their villages in Mexico. Shafter sent another detachment to set up a similar scouting camp thirty miles downstream from Duncan. Although Indians did not stage a revenge raid for Mackenzie's attack, Camp Shafter remained in use for several months. Cavalry from the camp patrolled the Rio Grande during this period in efforts to stop cattle thieves and Mexican political extremists reported in the area.\textsuperscript{77} The following summer, cavalry from Fort Duncan used Camp Shafter as a grazing camp to fatten their horses when the grass became too poor near the fort.\textsuperscript{78}
Other outposts of Fort Duncan included another grazing camp twelve miles from the fort, used in the early spring of 1876, and Fort Hudson, used as a scouting camp by Lieutenant Colonel Shafter’s command from April through October of that year.79

Together, the forts on the lower Rio Grande and their outposts provided a network of points from which patrols operated. Those patrols tried, primarily, to reduce cross-border depredations in the border counties of Texas.

Troops at those outposts operated under disadvantages even worse in some ways than those faced by the army in other areas of the state. For one thing, sanctuary for Indian and, especially, Mexican marauders existed just across the border. Ranches lay all along the north side of the Rio Grande. Raiders had merely to ford the river, ride a few miles, strike an isolated herd or ranch house, and return to safety in Mexico with their stolen cattle. Chances were extremely slim that a military patrol would happen along during the few hours that a raiding party was in Texas.

Additionally, many ostensibly law-abiding Mexican inhabitants of the Texas border counties, as well as ranchers and businessmen south of the river, helped and protected Mexican outlaws in their forays into the state. In the part of Mexico opposite Eagle Pass and Fort Duncan,
some towns did a thriving business with Kickapoo and Lipan warriors who often struck targets in Texas.

Thus, the army had to contend not only with a nearby sanctuary, but also with a civilian population and some Mexican government officials at least partially sympathetic to the raiders. Coupling those two factors with the large size of the frontier zone and the relatively small number of troops available, one finds the army's lack of great success in preventing cross-border raids understandable. Only with better cooperation from Mexico, realized late in the 1870s, did the army on the lower Rio Grande achieve a significant measure of success in pacifying the region.
ENDNOTES


2. Fort Brown Post Returns, November 1866, Record Group 94, National Archives, (Microfilm M-617, roll 152).


4. Ibid., July 1870.


7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., March 1872.

9. Ibid., March 1873.

10. Ibid., August-September 1874.


13. Ibid., October 1872.


15. Ibid., April-November 1873.


17. Ibid., July 1874.

18. Fort Brown Post Returns, August 1875-June 1879.
19. Ibid., June-October 1879.

20. Ibid., January 1880-December 1886.

21. Ibid., June 1872.

22. Ibid., October 1872.


27. Fort Brown Post Returns, September 1881.

28. Ibid., January 1871-January 1877.


31. House, Report of Secretary of War, 1872, 57.


34. Ringgold Barracks Post Returns, October 1868.

35. Ibid., May-June 1873.

36. Ibid., July 1873-August 1875.

37. Ibid., November 1874.

38. Ibid., August 1875-October 1879.

39. Ibid., September 1875-September 1884.
40. Ibid., September 1870.

41. Ninth Cavalry Regimental Returns, November 1873.

42. Ringgold Barracks Post Returns, December 1873.

43. Ibid., January 1874.

44. Ninth Cavalry Regimental Returns, February 1874.


47. Ringgold Barracks Post Returns, May 1875.

48. Ibid., July 1876.

49. Ibid., May-September 1884.

50. Ibid., May 1868-February 1869.

51. Ibid., October 1877.

52. Ibid., April 1878.

53. Ibid., November 1878.

54. Ibid., March 1879.

55. Ibid., June 1873.

56. Ibid., October 1873.

57. Ibid., November 1873-April 1874.


59. Ringgold Barracks Post Returns, April-September 1874.

60. Ibid., March 1872-January 1875.


67. Fort Duncan Post Returns, March 1868, Record Group 94, National Archives (Microfilm M-617, roll 336).


69. Fort Duncan Post Returns, April-September 1868.


71. Fort Duncan Post Returns, May 1873.

72. Ibid., June-December 1875.


74. Fort Duncan Post Returns, July 1879-April 1880.


76. Fort Duncan Post Returns, February 1872, June 1873.


78. Fort Duncan Post Returns, June 1874.

79. Ibid., February-October 1876.
CHAPTER 6

FORT RICHARDSON AND ASSOCIATED POSTS

Just as the Rio Grande marked the southern border of Texas, another stream, the Red River, formed most of the state’s northern boundary. Above that river lived enemies every bit as dangerous and resourceful as those in Mexico. The allied Comanche and Kiowa tribes, assigned to vast reservations in Indian Territory near the site of Fort Sill, considered the northwestern half of Texas their rightful domain and the Texan inhabitants of that region their perpetual enemies.

Ever since the first settlers had moved into North Texas in the 1830s, the two tribes had raided their settlements and ranches incessantly. After settlers forced Comanches off a reservation in North Texas in the late 1850s, the attacks increased, and they increased again in the wake of the withdrawal of federal troops from the frontier at the beginning of the Civil War. Soldiers did not return to the northern frontier zone immediately after the war, although many occupied the interior of the state and attempted to reestablish federal authority over the white population.
A growing demand from settlers and Texas government officials for frontier protection finally brought the army back to North Texas. One company of the Sixth Cavalry Regiment rode into the town of Jacksboro in the summer of 1866 to take up the defense of that area. Six more companies of that regiment joined the vanguard at Jacksboro over the next five months. The troops lived in tents at first, but early in the new year work began on a permanent post to be built of log pickets.¹

In April 1867, the army transferred the companies at Jacksboro to two other locations that seemed to offer better protection to the frontier line. Four companies went west forty miles to old Fort Belknap, and the rest of the troops moved north to Buffalo Springs, twenty miles closer to the Red River. Although the army had intended those new stations to be permanent, most troops left them within a few months and returned to Jacksboro, where they began work on Fort Richardson.²

The fort formed one link in a chain of four new posts planned to cover the northwestern frontier of the state. Beginning with Fort Concho near the confluence of the three branches of the Concho River in Tom Green County, the proposed chain stretched north and east to Fort Griffin on the Clear Fork of the Brazos, to Richardson, and on to Fort Burnham. Military authorities wanted to locate Fort Burnham, to be named in honor of Brigadier General Hiram
Burnham, who was killed near Richmond in 1864, on the Red River near the mouth of the Little Wichita. The post would house four companies of cavalry and two of infantry. General J. J. Reynolds, commanding the District of Texas, would determine the exact location for the post.\textsuperscript{3}

To make that determination, Lieutenant Thomas Tolman made a tour of northern Montague County in the late winter of 1868, looking for the best site.\textsuperscript{4} Officers designated A and C Companies, Sixth Cavalry, to garrison the new post.\textsuperscript{5} In June, however, the army cancelled plans for Burnham, primarily because no good site existed near the mouth of the Little Wichita. That stream flooded frequently, making a major cavalry post there impractical.\textsuperscript{6}

With plans for Fort Burnham scrapped, Fort Richardson served as the northernmost link in the defense chain. As such, it had responsibility for patrols through the Red River counties and those just to the south to check Indian raiding parties. In addition, large-scale offensive expeditions striking at the home ground of certain Indian bands originated at the fort. For a time, however, the garrison remained too weak and the horses too poor to perform even escort and patrol duty adequately.\textsuperscript{7}

A shift in troops eventually remedied that situation, but civilians in the area clamored for permission to organize local defense companies to provide protection the army seemed unable to give. As early as 1866, the Texas
Legislature had provided for state forces to help protect certain counties in North Texas, but General Philip Sheridan had vetoed the plan.⁸

By late fall of 1868, however, raids in the area reached such proportions that the commanding officer of Fort Richardson authorized temporary enrollment of citizens in Wise, Denton, and Montague counties to pursue Indian bands marauding in those counties. The fort could spare only four or five soldiers to join with citizens on any such pursuit.⁹

The command at Richardson refined its instructions a few days later, allowing permanent organization of civilian companies, in order to allow for a quicker call to arms in the event of attack. The orders limited each county to one hundred men and required that names and addresses of each be filed with the fort. A citizen captain commanded each company, and either he or the county judge could call the unit to action. Citizens had to furnish their own horses and weapons, although the fort could lend surplus arms and supply food to the companies when available. Volunteers served without pay.¹⁰

Despite the expressed desires of settlers in the area to organize defense companies, the effort met with indifferent success. Only twenty-three men enlisted in the vicinity of Jacksboro. They elected Edward Wolffarth as their captain. Following a raid on May 23, 1869, only
Wolffarth and ten men responded to the call to arms. They, along with a small military detail, launched a pursuit lasting several days but failed to destroy the war party. Even fewer men volunteered for service in Cooke and Montague counties.11

Further efforts at cooperation between civilian and military forces in the vicinity of Fort Richardson accomplished little. Large-scale military offensives against the Indian on his home ground seemed to promise better results.

The army undertook its first major offensive operation from Fort Richardson in response to the massacre of several teamsters west of the fort by a large party of Kiowa and Comanche warriors. On May 18, 1871, over a hundred braves from the reservations in Indian Territory hit a wagon train transporting corn from Weatherford to Fort Griffin along the stage road. The war party swept down on the train from a low hill and overran it before the twelve teamsters could circle their wagons and prepare a defense. Five of the white men fled on foot to the concealment of a stand of small oaks and escaped, but the other seven died at the hands of the warriors.12

As a result of this attack and the grave impression it made on military leaders in the region and in Washington, a large force under Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie left Fort Richardson in July to operate against the Kiowas. The
column accomplished little in its attempt to locate and punish certain bands of that tribe. A followup Mackenzie expedition onto the Staked Plains in the fall skirmished with Kwahadi Comanches and lost many horses to a surprise night raid by those warriors but again obtained no decisive result.13

In the summer of 1872, Mackenzie launched a new offensive from Fort Richardson against the Comanches of the Staked Plains. He moved farther north into the Texas Panhandle that year and destroyed a major Comanche village on the North Fork of the Red River on September 29. His command took over a hundred Comanche women and children prisoners along with a horse herd of many hundreds. Although warriors succeeded in recapturing most of the horses from Mackenzie’s men that night, the prisoners did not escape. The army kept them in custody as an effective means of forcing warriors to go to the reservation.14

Fort Richardson did not serve as a base for any further major offensives because it stood too far east of the Staked Plains, the primary target region for such expeditions.15 It did provide continuing protection for settlers near the Red River, however, and in that way aided pacification of that portion of the frontier. The number of settlers in the region increased rapidly in the late 1870s to the point that existing mail and transportation facilities felt the strain.16 Finally, on May 23, 1878, the army abandoned
Fort Richardson because Indian danger from north of the Red River had largely ceased to exist.17

Fort Richardson had a connection with several smaller posts in North Texas. Those posts existed primarily to protect certain settled localities or stretches of the mail route westward. In some cases they served as independent posts, and in others as subposts, picket stations, or special-purpose camps.

Buffalo Springs, some twenty miles north of Jacksboro, functioned as an independent post for a significant period of time and later as a subpost of Fort Richardson. In fact, the army at one time intended for Buffalo Springs, rather than Richardson, to be the major fort in the region. When the army evacuated Jacksboro in April 1867, two companies from that location, along with their share of the military supplies there, went to Buffalo Springs to establish a permanent post.18

Twenty miles northeast lay the little settlement of Victoria, the next place beyond Buffalo Springs with any settlers. At the latter, the two companies of Sixth Cavalry troopers camped in a grove of trees near the springs.19

Captain B. T. Hutchins, commanding A Company, assumed command of Buffalo Springs when the troops arrived there. Hutchins faced problems from the beginning. The command lacked enough horses and saddles to mount all of its troops.20 Nevertheless, when Indians appeared in Clay and
Montague counties in June, Hutchins and thirty-five men rode after them. The command scouted to the Little Wichita at Van Dorn’s Crossing, followed the river for a while, then explored a section of the road between Belknap and Camp Radsminski before returning to Buffalo Springs. They found tracks believed to be made by Indians but too old to follow.\textsuperscript{21}

The following month, Hutchins again led a scout out of Buffalo Springs. He took seventy men after a party of Indians who had stolen several government mules from a detachment of troops and civilian teamsters cutting timber eighteen miles from the post. The Indians killed one civilian in the action, and the detachment returned to Buffalo Springs to make their report.\textsuperscript{22}

Forty-five men remained behind at the post, unable to join the scout because of the lack of saddles. The day after Hutchins left, a group of citizens from Decatur passed through, telling the lieutenant in charge of the post that they were trailing a party of 250 Indians, probably the same band, and that the Indians were at that moment only five miles from Buffalo Springs.\textsuperscript{23} The lieutenant apparently thought they were lying, for he had them disarmed and thrown into the guard house.\textsuperscript{24}

The lieutenant and a sergeant issued ammunition to the troops and placed pickets at some distance from the post to give advance warning in case of attack. Approximately one
hundred civilian workers building the post had camped a half mile north of the military bivouac. They had no weapons.  

At about 7 p.m. just as the bugler was blowing "Retreat," sentries shouted a warning, and a very large party of Indians rode into view. Thirty soldiers deployed in a skirmish line and advanced, firing, as the Indians charged. The Indians halted their attack, and the troops pulled back and took up defensive positions in and around the corral, which was in the middle of the camp. Soldiers had already herded the command's horses and mules into the corral for protection. The lieutenant sent a handful of women who happened to be at the post into the forage house near the corral for safety and detailed several men to guard that building.  

The Indians did not attack again that night. The next day they remained in small groups at various locations around the post but still did not attack. Finally they disappeared.  

The attack marked one of the few times when such a large force of Indians raided in the state and actually threatened a military post. Comanches and Kiowas, which made up the great majority of this war party and almost all others that came into the North Texas area, did tend to raid in somewhat larger groups than Apaches and other tribes to the south. But even so, parties of more than forty were the exception rather than the rule.
Hutchins, meanwhile, led his patrol to Flat Top Mountain and set up observation posts at various points on it because it overlooked several trails frequently used by Indians to leave the settlements. Finding nothing, the troops swung out to Fort Belknap then circled south, crossed the Trinity River, and approached Buffalo Springs. Three miles from the post they came across a large Indian trail. When he rode back into the post and received a report on the Indian attack, Hutchins immediately wrote the District of Texas headquarters, requesting a company of infantry and even a light artillery piece for future defense of Buffalo Springs, as well as the equipment and horses his men lacked.²⁸

Construction of the post at Buffalo Springs went on through the spring and summer and into the fall of 1867. About a hundred civilian workers, primarily masons and quarrymen, worked through much of the summer.²⁹ Troops labored right beside them. A party of two noncommissioned officers and ten men on extra duty built the forage house in late spring.³⁰ One party cut logs in the nearest woods and hauled them into camp behind mule teams. Another detail of extra-duty men built a stockade around the existing corral with those logs.³¹ The stockade served as a powerful redoubt in case of another attack. A 250 by 200-foot rectangle, it consisted of logs rising ten feet above ground
level and sharpened on the top. A double gate barred the main entrance.32

At times the command had difficulty obtaining building materials for some of the structures at the post. They faced such a problem in mid-summer when they began work on a post bakery. The delay adversely affected the troops' diet, causing them to continue eating hardtack instead of fresh bread until workers finally completed the bakery.33

Most building material had to come from a considerable distance away. Finished items such as windows came by wagon all the way from the port of Indianola on the Gulf. Troops hauled stone and lumber almost twenty miles from a point along the West Fork of the Trinity River. To manufacture building mortar, men operated a lime burner at Buffalo Springs. Soldiers and civilian workers cut the stone and lumber used for the buildings by hand. Stone walls of some buildings had loopholes cut into them for defensive fire.34

The command at Buffalo Springs took action early to provide adequate housing for troops for the coming winter. In late August, the men began building winter quarters. Each company built its own huts out of pickets. During the time it was building its quarters, a company had no regular garrison duty, so the work progressed rapidly.35 By the time winter arrived, troops had already settled snugly into their huts.36
Additional structures went up during the fall. The need for protection from another attack remained a primary concern in designing those structures. By early November the post already had a hospital. To make it more defensible, the command detailed eleven enlisted men to build a protective stockade around it.\textsuperscript{37}

All of this construction benefitted local citizens and the area economy significantly. During the summer of 1867, almost one hundred civilians worked on the construction crews at the post. Masons and quarrymen made up the majority of these, but about twenty carpenters also lent their skills to the effort. In addition, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, common laborers, and other craftsmen served on the work force. The civilian payroll at Buffalo Springs for August totaled over $7000. All construction costs for the post amounted to approximately $100,000, virtually all of it going into the civilian economy.\textsuperscript{38}

Officers and men at Buffalo Springs made efforts to improve the training of their fellow soldiers or at least to provide some mental diversion from the tedium of life at the remote post. Late in November, the command instituted a school of instruction for officers and noncommissioned officers three days every week.\textsuperscript{39} In a less formal, unofficial approach, some troopers printed a one-page newspaper, writing the articles themselves and distributing the sheet to the rest of the men.\textsuperscript{40}
Despite these efforts, morale at Buffalo Springs suffered during the summer and fall. Overwork sapped the men's spirits most of all. In addition to heavy manual labor building the post, troops served on guard details, herding parties, and other garrison duties. Because of difficulties between the white population in North Texas and newly freed blacks, some soldiers from Buffalo Springs had to protect government officials attempting to register voters in the region. Others had to drive wagon teams as an extra-duty assignment when the army decided to dismiss the civilian teamsters at the post.\(^{41}\)

Fortunately for the garrison, two new companies of the Sixth Cavalry arrived to reinforce them and share the workload in the fall. The eight officers now at the post decided to name it Camp Tucker in honor of one of their recently deceased comrades in the regiment, Captain Henry Tucker.\(^{42}\)

In October, while construction went forward on various post buildings, a serious shortcoming in the Buffalo Springs location became apparent to its commanding officer, Captain Hutchins. A stream that had provided plenty of fresh water for the post when it was established in April had stopped running because of a three-month drought beginning in July. Settlers reported that things had never been so dry there before. Lakes, ponds, and springs throughout the area dried
up. Although troops dug wells, they did not provide as much water as desired.\(^43\)

Hutchins reported the problem to his superiors in San Antonio and made certain observations and recommendations regarding proper locations for military posts. He believed that a cavalry post should be placed next to a never-failing stream of clear water. The stream should supply abundant water at all times of year, even in the driest years.\(^44\)

Permanent water supplies proved much more vital to the army than to their opponents in North Texas for obvious reasons—military posts were stationary while Indian war parties seldom camped two days in the same spot. Raiders could keep moving until they found enough water to replenish their supplies, but even a small military post had to have a reliable water source. In the southwestern part of the state ten years later, military commanders such as Colonel Benjamin Grierson turned the region’s limited water supplies into an advantage for the army, but in North Texas in the late 1860s the scarcity of water worked in favor of their enemies.

Hutchins recommended that construction at Camp Tucker/Buffalo Springs stop, at least temporarily, while an expert inspected the region for locations with permanent water and suitable in other respects for a large post. He knew only three sites where the army could establish a replacement for the camp. The first, a point near Red River
Station twenty-five miles north, had a reputation as unhealthy. The second, on a stretch of the Wichita River, had no health drawbacks but lay so far west on the frontier line that it left settlements in the Buffalo Springs area without protection. The third site, Jacksboro, had the disadvantage of being thirty miles inside the frontier line, but it stood in the center of an area often hit by Indians. In addition, it possessed abundant water, as well as grass, wood, and building stone. In case other good locations near Buffalo Springs had been overlooked before, Hutchins sent Captain Daniel Madden on a scout through the vicinity to find them.\textsuperscript{45}

Only two weeks after his first report, Hutchins and his men found an excellent, and apparently permanent, source of abundant water for the post. Troopers dug out the spring, located not far from camp, to a diameter of fifteen feet. Enlarged in such a manner, it yielded an hourly flow of one hundred gallons of excellent water.\textsuperscript{46}

In mid-November, Major R. M. Morris relieved Hutchins as commanding officer of Buffalo Springs. Changes came quickly under Morrison. He overhauled the guard details at the post, and he ordered Captain Madden and C Company, Sixth Cavalry, to reoccupy Jacksboro permanently.\textsuperscript{47} Despite discovery of the new water source at Buffalo Springs, District of Texas headquarters in San Antonio determined to switch locations of the main post back to Jacksboro.
Madden's company guarded civilians rebuilding that post, but by December three companies still occupied Buffalo Springs. Major Morris requested that they be allowed to remain through the winter because their quarters were comfortable, and plenty of supplies were on hand.\textsuperscript{48}

In early January, troops at Buffalo Springs saw some minor action. An Indian raid near Montague, northeast of the post, brought Major Morris and a small detachment to that settlement to investigate. Because the war party had left the vicinity several days earlier and he had few serviceable horses, Morris did not pursue them, but he did leave several enlisted men there as a temporary guard.\textsuperscript{49}

Within weeks, Captain Daniel Madden relieved Morris and assumed command of Buffalo Springs as well as Jacksboro. He switched his headquarters to the latter and ordered one of the three companies remaining at Buffalo Springs to join him and bring the post records with them. A question still existed at that time of whether the army would completely abandon Buffalo Springs or keep it as a picket station.\textsuperscript{50}

On February 23, 1868, Madden ordered the remaining two companies at Buffalo Springs to change station to Jacksboro, hauling the quartermaster stores at the latter location with them.\textsuperscript{51} A few men remained behind to serve as a picket station under the command of Lieutenant Thomas Tolman.\textsuperscript{52} The station remained active into the spring, sending out scouts in the vicinity. Finally, on April 15, the
commanding officer of Fort Richardson disestablished Buffalo Springs.\textsuperscript{53}

The post served most importantly as base for many scouting operations and patrols over the year of its existence. Indirectly, it benefitted the Texas frontier because the Indian attack on the post during the summer of 1867 caused such concern among government officials that they established a camp near the reservations to monitor Indian activity. That camp in Indian Territory later became Fort Sill.\textsuperscript{54}

When the army evacuated Jacksboro in April 1867, and sent two of the companies there to Buffalo Springs, the other four companies from the abandoned post headed west to occupy old Fort Belknap, one of the most important pre-Civil War forts in North Texas. The army intended to rebuild and reactivate the fort, if feasible, as it held a strategic location.\textsuperscript{55}

Fort Belknap stood on a bluff a half mile north and east of the Brazos River. Forty miles east lay Jacksboro. The old Overland mail route passed close to the fort. Most of the fort's buildings had suffered from the weather and from local settlers scrounging for building materials during the years since its abandonment by United States troops on the eve of the Civil War.\textsuperscript{55}

As with Buffalo Springs, Fort Belknap had a water problem. Although situated on the Brazos, the post could
not use it as a water source because of its terrible quality. Neither humans nor animals would drink it. Troops had dug a well at the fort, but it failed to provide a steady supply. Soldiers could haul water in from streams in the area, but their distance from the post made that method extremely inconvenient. As a result, the four companies sent to Belknap received orders in July to change station thirty miles northwest, to the site that would become Fort Griffin. They abandoned Fort Belknap accordingly, and headed west.\textsuperscript{57}

During the following years troops from Fort Richardson and, occasionally, Fort Griffin used Belknap at various times as a temporary camp or rendezvous point, as well as a mail escort relay station. The fort, however, never saw further use as a permanent outpost.\textsuperscript{58}

One post that did see permanent duty began in May 1870, when Colonel James Oakes, commanding officer of Fort Richardson, sent Captain C. B. McLellan and K Company, Sixth Cavalry, to scout the Red River area south and west to the Brazos for Kiowa and Comanche raiding parties. Oakes ordered McLellan to establish a scouting camp near the Little Wichita River to use as a base until at least June 10. The colonel hoped to keep a company there all summer, if he had enough troops to meet his other commitments.\textsuperscript{59} Those commitments included escorting herds on the cattle trails to California, scouting the state’s north central
counties, and providing escort to a Professor Roessler exploring for minerals in the area. An Indian attack that killed a stage driver near old Fort Belknap diverted Oakes' attention from the plan for a summer scouting camp and caused him to send McLellan's command after the war party. McLellan crossed the Red River and eventually recovered most of the mail taken in the raid, then turned south. On July 12, he fought a superior Indian force on the north fork of the Little Wichita and suffered a defeat at their hands.

In a report to his superiors in San Antonio, Oakes expressed the army's frustration with the type of warfare in which they were engaged. Large patrols seldom caught or came to grips with Indian raiders, but, according to him, smaller columns lacked the strength to defeat most war parties. Obviously, McLellan's recent defeat had made a deep impression on Oakes. He suggested that a strong offensive expedition far into the Indians' home territory, possibly even onto the reservations, coupled with smaller defensive patrols through the Texas settlements, offered some chance of success. Even that tactic, however, might well fail because plentiful grass and water at the time gave Indian bands complete freedom of movement. In any event, Oakes had no opportunity to try what he had suggested because he lacked sufficient troop strength. His comments did, however, make clear the inherent weakness of a
strategy that employed defensive patrols alone and left the initiative entirely in the Indians' hands.

Not until September did Fort Richardson have the opportunity to establish a semi-permanent scouting camp in the Little Wichita country north of the fort. Early in that month two companies of the Sixth Cavalry and one of the Eleventh Infantry set out for a spot on the East Fork of the Little Wichita, some ten miles northeast of Buffalo Springs. A third cavalry company planned to join them in a few days.63

Oakes believed that patrols from the new camp would be more effective than those from Richardson simply because the camp was in the immediate area to be scouted, rather than thirty or more miles away as Richardson was. He planned for the company of infantry to protect and garrison the camp while most of the cavalry engaged in constant patrols. Cavalry patrols out of Fort Richardson would cooperate with those from the scouting camp.64

In late September, Oakes and his superiors began considering the possibility of a new, permanent four-company post north or northwest of Richardson. They realized that adequate water was the most significant problem. Both the Little and Big Wichitas ran very low and sometimes even dry in certain months, and their water became undrinkable. Oakes charged Major R. M. Morris, commanding the scouting
camp, with locating a suitable site for the proposed new post.  

The scouting camp, called Camp Wichita, had ample good water most of the time. Troops dammed a stream beside the camp to accumulate a supply and also utilized ponds close by. Oakes planned to keep the camp in operation through the fall and winter and ordered Morris to dig a well if necessary.  

For scouts out of Camp Wichita, Oakes laid down a strict policy. Any patrol coming across an Indian trail should follow it so long as the least hope of success remained. He reprimanded one officer who had given up a trail too easily on a recent patrol. Scouts from Camp Wichita had responsibility to cover the area from the headwaters of the West Fork of the Trinity to the Red River and eastward, but Oakes expanded that area toward the northwest and the southeast.  

Because the army planned for Camp Wichita to be only a temporary post, the command at Fort Richardson would not send materials such as doors and windows for structures at the camp. Troops lived in tents raised on pickets. Before they did any other building, they had to construct pole sheds for their animals. At Camp Wichita the need to stop costly Indian raids on the local settlements dominated everything else, especially comfort of the garrison.
Troops from the camp clashed with Indians in early October and lost thirteen horses. That patrol, reinforced by another detachment under Captain McLellan, pursued the Indians but lost them. Fort Richardson sent additional scouts into the vicinity that month until five companies of cavalry were operating in the area, as well as the infantry company guarding the camp. Colonel Oakes ordered Morris to build a picket stockade for defense of the post and promised to send a few Tonkawa Indians, expert scouts used by the army, as soon as possible.69

Oakes sent the Tonkawas, but trouble came of it. Two of them returned in November to Fort Richardson as military prisoners charged with minor violations. Both scouts had horses they had captured in a recent action against Comanches, and a corporal from Camp Wichita confiscated those animals when he saw the scouts being taken into custody at Fort Richardson. The two Tonkawas demanded the horses be returned because, customarily, Tonkawa scouts received any horses they captured from hostile Indians. Captain John Irwin, commanding Camp Wichita after Major Morris, had to investigate the matter.70

The frequent patrols out of Camp Wichita wore down the horses there to such a point by late November that the command had to curtail scouting to rest and fatten their animals. Just days later, however, troopers mounted up once
again in response to a raid that killed two women and captured five children near Montague.\textsuperscript{71}

An exceptionally severe winter caused considerable hardship for men and animals at Camp Wichita. Travel to Fort Richardson became dangerous. Lieutenant H. B. Mellen attempted the trip in December in order to sit on a court-martial. In swimming his horse across the swollen West Fork of the Trinity during a blizzard, he tumbled down a bank and back into the icy water. He managed to make it to the bank again but then collapsed from the cold and lay for two days and nights in below zero temperatures before a party of hunters found and rescued him. He recovered eventually, but lost a leg and the other foot to frostbite.\textsuperscript{72}

By the middle of winter, Camp Wichita had almost exhausted its hay supply, and one cavalry company had to return to Fort Richardson. The remaining horses faced strict rationing.\textsuperscript{73} On request of the commanding officer of the camp, Fort Richardson despatched several wagons and teams, along with a number of scythes, to Camp Wichita for the purpose of cutting and gathering in hay standing in open fields near the camp. Officers hoped it would carry the animals through the last few weeks of winter until spring grass began coming up.\textsuperscript{74}

The end of the subpost at Camp Wichita came suddenly. In late winter orders arrived at Fort Richardson transferring the entire Sixth Cavalry north to Fort Sill.
On March 10, 1871, all available wagons at Fort Richardson headed out for the camp to bring in the three remaining companies there under Major A. K. Arnold.\textsuperscript{75}

In addition to the posts already discussed, Fort Richardson controlled a number of less important picket stations and outposts, including Sherman, Pilot Grove, the government sawmill, Montague, Salt Creek, and others.

A detachment from Richardson garrisoned Sherman, near the Red River, in early and mid-1868. It consisted of fifteen men under Lieutenant E. C. Hentig.\textsuperscript{76}

Eighteen miles southeast of Sherman, the community of Pilot Grove hosted a small outpost of Fort Richardson during 1868 and 1869. Lieutenant J. H. Sands commanded the detachment there in the summer of 1868.\textsuperscript{77} The post continued until August 10, 1869.\textsuperscript{78}

Most forts established a sawmill to provide lumber for building purposes, and Fort Richardson did not deviate from that tradition. In fact, the fort had two sawmills associated with it. The first functioned under control of Buffalo Springs when that post was in operation. Troops set up that sawmill along the West Fork of the Trinity, about eighteen miles from Buffalo Springs.\textsuperscript{79} A small detachment of enlisted men guarded the sawmill and its civilian engineer and sawyer.\textsuperscript{80}

The new sawmill, operating under Fort Richardson's direct command, stood on Big Sandy in Wise County east of
the fort, in the same general area as the first mill. Six enlisted men guarded the civilians and government property at the new sawmill. In November 1868, Fort Richardson sent an eight-man patrol under Lieutenant Moses Wiley out after Indians raiding near the sawmill. Wiley attempted to get local citizens to join his detail in pursuing the Indians. The following June, Lieutenant Isaac Walter took charge of the sawmill with orders to run the mill as efficiently as possible and to keep a precise inventory of all lumber and shingles cut and sent to the fort.81

Although the sawmill escaped serious danger from Indians, a murder occurred in the vicinity in October 1869. Sergeant F. Socker, D Company, Sixth Cavalry, and a Private Hyland of the same regiment left the mill for Fort Richardson, returning from detached service. At a spot approximately twenty miles short of the fort, Hyland apparently murdered the sergeant, who was known to be carrying a quantity of money. Officers at the fort arrested Hyland, but later released him for lack of evidence. He deserted immediately and fled to Weatherford, where certain civilians murdered him.82

The town of Montague, forty miles northeast of the fort, held a temporary garrison more than once during the active years of Fort Richardson. Major R. M. Morris stationed ten enlisted men there for a short time in January 1868, following a serious Indian raid in the area.83
in July 1870, a large war party hit settlements near Montague, and Fort Richardson sent a detachment of about twenty men to guard the town temporarily. In October further raids caused another detachment to stop in Montague for a few days.

For a number of weeks in late winter of 1871, Fort Richardson maintained a picket station at Salt Creek, on the road running west from the fort toward Fort Griffin. When the Sixth Cavalry transferred to Fort Sill in March, troops abandoned the post. Troops dubbed this picket post "Borthwick's Station" after the lieutenant in command.

A few points in Fort Richardson's area of responsibility received small details of troops as guards. Colonel Ranald Mackenzie stationed such a detail at Whaley's Ranch on the extreme forward edge of the frontier in the spring of 1872. Whaley's Ranch stood on the Red River, seven miles below the mouth of the Big Wichita and fifteen miles north of the settlement at Henrietta. Mackenzie planned to send a similar guard to Van Hoozier's Ranch during the same period, but orders from the Department of Texas took those troops elsewhere. Also at that time, a handful of soldiers guarded a hay camp for Fort Richardson.

In addition to those outposts, Fort Richardson occasionally established temporary camps for special purposes. In May and June 1868, Lieutenant Thomas Tolman
led a major scout of eighty-three men toward the Wichita Mountains in the southwestern part of Indian Territory. He selected a supply depot on Beaver Creek to which wagons hauled rations and forage for his command. Tolman's scouting column carried its supplies on pack mules but could return to the depot when they ran low. Tolman continued to use the camp for supplies and as a rendezvous point with additional detachments sent to reinforce him during the month of June.

In the early spring of 1870, at the beginning of the raiding season, Lieutenant James Hill and a twenty-two-man patrol under his command established a temporary scouting camp at Clear Creek in southwestern Cooke County. From that base they scouted Cooke, Montague, and Wise counties for three weeks before working back to Fort Richardson by way of Buffalo Springs. Lieutenant Frank Russell with a similar patrol operated out of a scouting camp between Weatherford and Palo Pinto during the same period. Russell's command scouted Parker and Palo Pinto counties for three and a half weeks then swung through old Fort Belknap and back to Richardson.

During the decade of its existence, Fort Richardson used these subposts and small stations primarily as extensions of its power to spots closer to the forward edge of the frontier. The region around the fort remained dangerous into the early 1870s because of its proximity to
the Kiowa and Comanche reservations, but at that time the army shifted its focus farther west into the Fort Griffin region as troops attempted to strike and defeat the last non-reservation bands on their home ground on the Staked Plains of northwest Texas.

That strategy, far more than the use of scouting camps and picket stations for defensive patrols, led to a significant measure of security for the Northwest Texas frontier by the mid-1870s. Almost certainly the region would have suffered more widespread depredations had places such as Camp Wichita never been garrisoned, but the use of outposts proved to be far from a decisive factor in the pacification of that part of the frontier.
ENDNOTES


4. Daniel Madden to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, February 27, 1868, Records of Fort Richardson, Texas, Record Group 393, National Archives (hereafter cited as RFRT) (microfilm in possession of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department).

5. Major, Sixth Cavalry, (no signature) to Adjutant General, United States Army, March 24, 1868, RFRT.

6. Commanding Officer, Fort Richardson, to C. E. Morse, June 17, 1868, RFRT.

7. R. M. Morris to Louis Caziare, February 14, 1869; James Oakes to C. E. Morse, May 15, 1869, RFRT.


9. Commanding Officer, Fort Richardson, to C. E. Morse, November 7, 1868, RFRT.

10. Commanding Officer, Fort Richardson, to Mr. H. Horton and Mr. R. H. Hopkins, November 11, 1868, RFRT.

11. James Oakes to C. E. Morse, May 29, 1869, RFRT.


13. Ibid., 99-119.

14. Ibid., 126-34.

15. Ibid., 135.
16. J. W. Davidson to D. M. Key, July 3, 1877, RFRT.


19. Ibid., 85.

20. B. Hutchins to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, May 18, 1867, RFRT.

21. Ibid., June 20, 1867, RFRT.

22. McConnell, Five Years a Cavalryman, 93-94.

23. Headquarters, Buffalo Springs, to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, July 24, 1867, RFRT.

24. McConnell, Five Years a Cavalryman, 96.

25. Ibid., 94-95.

26. Headquarters, Buffalo Springs, to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, July 24, 1867, RFRT.

27. Ibid.

28. B. Hutchins to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, July 23, 1867, RFRT.

29. McConnell, Five Years a Cavalryman, 85.

30. Special Orders No. 10, Buffalo Springs, May 28, 1867, RFRT.

31. Special Orders No. 34, Buffalo Springs, July 28, 1867, RFRT.

32. McConnell, Five Years a Cavalryman, 103.

33. B. Hutchins to W. A. Rafferty, June 29, 1867, RFRT.

35. Special Orders No. 40, Buffalo Springs, August 26, 1867, RFRT.

36. R. M. Morris, to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, December 19, 1867, RFRT.

37. Special Orders No. 73, Camp Tucker Buffalo Springs, November 5, 1867, RFRT.


39. Special Orders No. 88, Camp Tucker Buffalo Springs, November 24, 1867, RFRT.

40. McConnell, Five Years a Cavalryman, 172-73.

41. B. Hutchins to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, August 10, 1867, RFRT.

42. B. Hutchins to Adjutant General, United States Army, September 8, 1867; B. Hutchins to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, September 21, 1867; B. Hutchins to John Tucker, September 28, 1867, RFRT.

43. B. Hutchins to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, October 11, 1867, RFRT.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. B. Hutchins to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, October 24, 1867, RFRT.

47. Special Orders No. 80, Camp Tucker Buffalo Springs, November 15, 1867; Special Orders No. 81, Camp Tucker Buffalo Springs, November 16, 1867; Special Orders No. 84, Camp Tucker Buffalo Springs, November 19, 1867, RFRT.

48. R. M. Morris to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, December 19, 1867, RFRT.

49. R. M. Morris to C. E. Morse, January 16, 1868, RFRT.

50. Daniel Madden to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, February 11, 1868, RFRT.
51. H. P. Eakin to Commanding Officer, Buffalo Springs, February 23, 1868, RFRT.

52. Post Adjutant, Fort Richardson, to Thomas Tolman, April 4, 1868, RFRT.


55. McConnell, Five Years a Cavalryman, 62.

56. Ibid., 62-67.


58. General Orders No. 2, Headquarters, District of the Upper Brazos, May 22, 1877, RFRT.

59. James Oakes to Commanding Officer, Fort Sill, May 18, 1870, RFRT.

60. James Oakes to H. Clay Wood, June 2, 1870, RFRT.

61. Ibid., July 8 and July 17, 1870.

62. Ibid., July 17, 1870.

63. Ibid., September 10, 1870.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., September 26, 1870.

66. Ibid.

67. Post Adjutant, Fort Richardson, to R. M. Morris, October 4, 1870, RFRT.

68. Ibid., October 10, 1870.

69. Ibid., October 11, 1870.

70. Post Adjutant, Fort Richardson, to John A. Irwin, December 1, 1870, RFRT.
71. Post Adjutant, Fort Richardson, to Commanding Officer, Camp Wichita, November 30, 1870; Post Adjutant, Fort Richardson, to Commanding Officer, Camp Wichita, December 8, 1870, RFRT.


73. Post Adjutant, Fort Richardson, to Commanding Officer, Camp Wichita, January 18, 1871, RFRT.

74. Ibid., January 25, 1871.

75. James Oakes to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, March 10, 1871, RFRT.

76. Harrison Holt to E. C. Hentig, June 22, 1868; Headquarters, Fort Richardson, to J. H. Sands, July 28, 1868, RFRT.

77. Headquarters, Fort Richardson, to J. H. Sands, July 28, 1868, RFRT.

78. Medical Histories of Posts, Fort Richardson, Record group 94, National Archives, RFRT.


80. Special Orders No. 85, Camp Tucker Buffalo Springs, November 20, 1867, RFRT.

81. Special Orders No. 100, Fort Richardson, June 23, 1868; Special Orders No. 182, Fort Richardson, November 2, 1868; Special Orders No. 88, Fort Richardson, June 14, 1869, RFRT.

82. James Oakes to Lieutenant Richardson, Judge Advocate General, Jefferson, Texas, October 16, 1869; James Oakes to H. Clay Wood, December 4, 1869, RFRT.

83. R. M. Morris to C. E. Morse, January 16, 1868, RFRT.

84. James Oakes to H. Clay Wood, July 17, 1870, RFRT.

85. Post Adjutant, Fort Richardson, to Sergeant George Johnston, February 14, 1871; James Oakes to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, March 10, 1871, RFRT.

87. R. S. Mackenzie to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, May 9, 1872; R. S. Mackenzie to G. W. Schofield, June 4, 1872, RFRT.

88. R. S. Mackenzie to Mr. Loving, Weatherford, Texas, June 4, 1872.

89. Post Adjutant, Fort Richardson, to Commanding Officer, K Company, Eleventh Infantry, June 14, 1872, RFRT.

90. Special Orders No. 86, Fort Richardson, May 30, 1868, RFRT.

91. Special Orders No. 91, Fort Richardson, June 12, 1868, RFRT.

92. Special Orders No. 54, Fort Richardson, March 21, 1870, RFRT.
CHAPTER 7

FORT GRIFFIN, ITS OUTPOSTS, AND SUPPLY CAMPS ON THE STAKED PLAINS

Fort Griffin held a pivotal position in the late 1860s and early 1870s as the post closest to the critical region of the northern Staked Plains. Although many Comanche and Kiowa raids into Texas originated on the reservations in Indian Territory, the Staked Plains, or Llano Estacado, represented the untamed and undefeated elements of those tribes because the region had frustrated white efforts at exploration and settlement for decades. Both tribes had hunted on its vast, treeless expanses since the eighteenth century, and one band of Comanches still lived there, spurning government efforts to draw them to the reservation.

In an effort to improve protection of settlements for which it was responsible, Fort Griffin used several subposts and picket stations. In addition, on major military expeditions against Indians on the Staked Plains, commanders established advanced supply camps to enable their columns to persist in operations against hostile tribes without having to depend on supply lines stretching back to one of the major forts. Often Fort Griffin supplied the supply camps
and served as a jumping-off point for those offensive expeditions.

Fort Griffin began as a camp for four companies of the Sixth Cavalry who abandoned old Fort Belknap for lack of water and moved thirty miles southwest onto the Clear Fork of the Brazos in late July 1867. They made camp on low, soft ground near the river at first, but soon changed to a hill a quarter mile from the water. For a time military authorities referred to the post as Camp Wilson, after a deceased lieutenant.¹

Still under that name, the post sent out a significant scout on October 13. Forty-five enlisted men and twenty-two Tonkawa scouts, under command of Sergeant W. A. T. Ahrberg, rode 160 miles through Shackleford, Stephens, and Palo Pinto counties operating against Comanches. Unlike most patrols, this one found Indians. A war party had killed five settlers and stolen their horses when the troops appeared. They killed three warriors and captured an Indian woman, as well as nineteen horses and a mule.²

Shortly after that action, Camp Wilson received a new name, Fort Griffin, in honor of General Charles Griffin, commander of the Department of Texas for the previous two years, who had just died of yellow fever.³

Troops pitched tents for officers and men on the height soon named Government Hill. For the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel S. D. Sturgis, they transported a two-
room log house from an abandoned nearby ranch up to the top of the hill. Within a few months, wooden huts housed the enlisted men, and officers had separate living quarters with kitchens. The command used lumber for most of the rest of the buildings, too, although a few important structures were built of stone. The builders, however, failed to allow their lumber to cure before using it. As a result, many of the boards warped and split after they were set in place, causing leakage and drafts in virtually every building.

A civilian community of hard drinkers, gamblers, and buffalo hunters grew up on the flat land at the bottom of Government Hill. The hunters flocked to the region in large numbers in the early 1870s as a result of a new commercial process for tanning buffalo hides. Because of the new process and the resultant increase in demand for buffalo hides for industrial and commercial use, a huge, calculated slaughter of the bison began on the plains north and west of the post. Fort Griffin itself became a shipping and supply point for an army of hunters. At one point during the decade, six mail routes operated out of Fort Griffin to handle the traffic generated by the hide industry.

Primarily in response to the slaughter of the buffalo, warriors from Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne camps rose up in a desperate effort to sweep the hunters from the plains in the summer of 1874. In late June, several hundred braves hit a small camp of buffalo hunters at Adobe Walls on the
Canadian River and attempted to overrun the camp. The hunters with their long-range buffalo rifles and the advantage of some crude fortifications managed to break every Indian charge and inflicted heavy casualties on the warriors. The action at Adobe Walls marked the beginning of the Red River War, in which the army finally broke the power of the southern Plains tribes.  

General Philip Sheridan and his subordinates planned a simultaneous offensive by five attacking columns against the warring tribes gathered on the Staked Plains. One column under Colonel Nelson Miles moved south from Fort Dodge, Kansas, by way of Camp Supply, Indian Territory. Another under Major William Price advanced eastward from Fort Union, New Mexico. Lieutenant Colonel John Davidson headed west toward the Staked Plains from Fort Sill. Colonel Ranald Mackenzie led his troops north from Fort Concho. The final column, under Lieutenant Colonel George Buell, struck north and west from Fort Griffin between Davidson and Mackenzie.  

From previous experience, commanders of those columns knew that locating the Indian encampments would pose one of the greatest problems in the campaign. To aid in this undertaking, Miles employed twenty Delaware Indians as scouts, and Mackenzie used a number of Tonkawas from Fort Griffin, a few Lipan Apaches, and thirteen Seminole-Negro scouts from Fort Clark. Those scouts performed extremely
valuable service in locating bands of hostile Indians, especially the main Comanche camp in Palo Duro Canyon.9

On September 28, 1874, Mackenzie struck that camp, which stretched for two or three miles down the bottom of the canyon. His men managed to descend into the canyon from above without giving the Indians more than a few minutes of warning. Once on the canyon floor, the troops mounted and charged through the huge village, scattering the Indians. Sporadic fighting continued for several hours as Mackenzie’s men drove the Indians back from one point to another. After the fighting ended, he ordered the village and everything it contained to be burned, and he had all but a few of the huge Indian horse herd that he had captured shot to prevent their recapture by the resourceful Comanches. That army victory, coupled with relentless patrols and a severe winter that wore down and demoralized those Indians who chose to continue fighting for a time, proved decisive in bringing the war to an eventual conclusion early the next year.10

Attacking villages became one of the army’s most successful tactics against Indians on the plains, from Texas up to the Canadian border. Many people disputed the morality of such attacks because Indian women and children often became victims in the fighting, and entire villages faced exposure and starvation following the destruction of a military assault. The army, however, had few other options in bringing its power to bear. Although most of its units
had the firepower and discipline to defeat and even destroy virtually any Indian force not greatly superior in numbers, those units could seldom bring a war party to bay long enough to engage them in regular battle.¹¹

Attacks on villages gave the army that opportunity to come to grips with its Indian opponents, as did winter campaigns. Both tactics neutralized the Indians’ superiority in mobility, the former by hitting them when they were hampered by family and possessions, the latter by striking when their horses had no green grass. In addition to those two methods, the army’s use of Indian scouts to locate their enemy proved valuable and effective. Some officers advocated the further step of using larger units of Indian or frontiersman auxiliaries not only to hunt hostile bands, but also to conduct the actual attacks upon them.¹²

Despite the occasional large-scale offensive operation, the army more commonly followed a defensive strategy against Indians threatening the frontier, a strategy blessed by both General William T. Sherman and Sheridan. In other parts of the nation as well as in Texas, troops raised fort after fort, most of them to protect either routes of travel or settlements. Unfortunately, the army tried to man too many forts with too small a force.¹³

In any given year between 1867 and 1881, for example, Texas alone had twenty or more active posts but only a few understrength regiments to man them. This strategy of a
network of many moderate or small posts attempted to provide
defense for virtually every endangered spot. With so few
troops, however, the garrison at each post could not
adequately patrol its entire area of responsibility, and
raiding parties slipped through the cordon with small chance
of interference by the army.\textsuperscript{14}

Despite its limitations, the use of many small posts
did offer some benefits over the alternative of a few very
large forts. Without being close enough to a trouble spot
to respond quickly, troops provided no defense for it. Only
a multitude of small posts could distribute soldiers to all
the areas most likely to need them. If rail lines had
covered the frontier earlier, they would have provided
enough mobility to allow concentration of troops at a few
large posts. In the event of trouble, trains could have
rushed units to the scene rather quickly. That level of
railroad coverage did not come until approximately 1880,
however, and only then did the government begin turning to a
policy of concentration rather than dispersal.\textsuperscript{15}

Thus hampered by inadequate defensive capabilities,
military commanders turned more and more to offensive
operations designed to carry the fight to the Indian where
he was most vulnerable and least mobile. In an effort to
increase their own mobility during the Red River War and
other offensive campaigns on the Staked Plains, officers
such as Mackenzie made extensive use of supply camps. Such
camps, used as bases of operations, enabled them to strike farther and pursue Indians more relentlessly because supplies were within much closer reach.

In his expedition against Comanches on the Llano Estacado following the Warren wagon train massacre in 1871, Mackenzie established a supply camp early in October, near the southeastern corner of present-day Crosby county. The camp stood not far from the mouth of Blanco, or Yellow House, Canyon at a stream known variously as Duck Creek or Catfish Creek. Army officers usually referred to it as the supply camp on the Freshwater Fork of the Brazos, that fork also being called the White River.¹⁶

Captain Henry Lawton took command of the supply camp when Mackenzie led the main column onward seeking Comanche villages. Two companies of infantry stayed behind to guard the supply wagons there.¹⁷ Lawton worked out of the supply camp during the next five weeks, hauling rations, forage, and ammunition to Mackenzie’s command in its operations against Comanches, and bringing supplies from Fort Griffin to replenish stocks at the camp.¹⁸

The following year, Mackenzie again ventured out onto the Staked Plains, this time to operate against not only recalcitrant Indians, but also New Mexican traders who supplied guns and other valuable items to those Indians in exchange for stolen cattle and horses. Those traders, known as Comancheros, had established a good trail westward across
the plains from their trading camps to settlements in New Mexico. The trail had good water and grazing all along its course.\(^{19}\)

On orders from General C. C. Augur, commanding the Department of Texas, Mackenzie reestablished the camp on the Freshwater Fork of the Brazos in May.\(^{20}\) Again he used it as a supply depot and base of operations against the Comanches as well as Comancheros. From that base he led major scouts as far as the headwaters of the Red River near Palo Duro Canyon and along the cattle thieves’ road to New Mexico. Fort Griffin again served as the main point furnishing supplies to the wagons plying the trail out to the supply camp. Those trains hauled forage on a regular schedule for the hundreds of horses and mules of Mackenzie’s command and rations and ammunition for the men. A few supply trains bound for the camp also originated at Fort Concho.\(^{21}\)

Mackenzie found no Indians on the Staked Plains during the initial phases of his 1872 campaign. He believed that they had gone farther north and scoured the countryside in that direction to find them. In preparation for those operations, he made arrangements to have an alternate source of supply available closer to his proposed patrol area by ordering a considerable quantity of rations and forage to be laid up at Camp Supply in Indian Territory.\(^{22}\) Nevertheless, he continued to use the camp on the Freshwater
Fork as his base of supply, and his wagons continued to rely primarily on Fort Griffin from which to obtain those supplies because of its proximity and the good quality of the road between it and the supply camp.\textsuperscript{23}

Mackenzie's move to the north yielded results in late September. His scouts located a large Comanche camp on the North Fork of the Red River a short distance above the mouth of McClellan's Creek. The command overran the village, killing over twenty braves and capturing 120 women and children as well as the Indian horse herd. That night Comanches succeeded in stampeding and recapturing the herd, but the captives remained, and Mackenzie's command returned to the supply camp and, eventually, their garrison forts.\textsuperscript{24}

During the same campaign, Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Shafter and troops from the Twenty-fourth Infantry operated out of the supply camp on the Freshwater Fork in conjunction with Mackenzie. While the latter moved far to the north and west, Shafter scouted and mapped the country closer to camp, especially south of it. His command provided a mobile security force for the camp and returned to it for rest and fresh supplies when needed.\textsuperscript{25}

Two years after that campaign, Mackenzie again led a column onto the Staked Plains, this time for the last round against the tribes of the southern plains, in the Red River War. He operated again from his old supply camp on the Freshwater Fork of the Brazos. On September 2, 1874,
Lieutenant Henry Lawton, serving as quartermaster of the expedition, led an empty wagon train out of the camp back for Fort Griffin to load more supplies. Lawton and his men made many more such trips, often under the most adverse weather conditions that caused the loss of animals and cargo. The trip covered almost 140 miles over the route blazed by Mackenzie in 1871 and commonly known as the Mackenzie Trail.  

As in the past, Mackenzie made plans for additional supply camps to serve his troops when they operated too far from the Freshwater camp. He considered establishing one such camp at McClellan's Creek, site of his 1872 victory. The Freshwater camp, however, remained the main, and by far most important, supply camp during the campaign. From it, Lieutenant Lawton sent loaded wagons to Mackenzie's force and other units in the field, allowing them to continue operating for many weeks at a time without having to return to the camp. That supply service gave the army the edge in mobility it needed to prosecute the war successfully.

Troops evacuated the supply camp on January 10, 1875, and returned to Fort McKavett shortly thereafter. Army units returned later that year, however, for a few more months. Lieutenant Colonel Shafter used the camp as his base of supply during mopping up operations on the Staked Plains. Captain T. A. Baldwin also participated in those
operations and led a long scout out of the supply camp in August 1875.  

While the supply camp operated as virtually an independent camp, connected with Fort Griffin only because the supply route originated at that fort, other small posts existed as actual outposts of Griffin. Those included the subpost of Phantom Hill and the picket station at Mountain Pass.

Fort Phantom Hill had served as a major post on the northwestern frontier of Texas in the early 1850s, but the army had pulled out in 1854. Fire destroyed the fort shortly afterwards. In 1858, the Overland Mail began using one or two surviving stone buildings as a way station. Not until well after the Civil War, however, did the army reoccupy the old fort.

When they did return to Phantom Hill, troops used it merely as a subpost of Fort Griffin. A small detachment garrisoned the post by the early summer of 1869. Conditions proved difficult for the men in that remote spot. They had no choice but to live in tents since little remained of the fort's original buildings. Discomfort led to poor morale among some of the men and at least one desertion early in Phantom Hill's existence as a subpost.  

Loneliness also plagued the garrison, especially in the early days. The detachment at Phantom Hill numbered just five privates with a corporal in charge. Their duties of
guarding the mail station gave them little chance to see many other people and even less chance for entertainment.\textsuperscript{34}

Troops at the subpost found some degree of excitement in October 1869, when Indians struck at a stage a few miles west. A cavalry patrol from Fort Concho under Captain John Bacon moved out in pursuit, operating in conjunction with another cavalry force under Lieutenant P. H. Boehm. The two columns attempted but failed to catch the raiding party between them near Phantom Hill. Bacon’s patrol trailed a party of a dozen Indians for a time before losing them and returning to their post by way of Phantom Hill.\textsuperscript{35}

A manpower shortage threatened Phantom Hill’s existence the following spring. Enlistments of so many soldiers at Fort Griffin were expiring that the possibility existed of having to close the subpost for lack of men to garrison it. The commanding officer at Griffin requested either reinforcements or that Fort Concho temporarily take responsibility for garrisoning Phantom Hill. In the event that neither of those possibilities worked out, he planned to man the subpost with a detachment of one noncommissioned officer, one private, and five of his Tonkawa scouts, although such an assignment placed the Tonkawas in great danger. Comanches had such hatred for the other tribe that they would have readily attacked so weak an outpost if they found out their enemies were there.\textsuperscript{36} A war party did
attack troops from Phantom Hill a few days later, but the army soon closed the subpost.\textsuperscript{37}

Orders from the Department of Texas the next May called for reestablishment of the subpost at Phantom Hill. Detachments would serve one month before being relieved, and at least two officers and an infantry company would serve at the subpost at all times. A small cavalry detachment had responsibility for providing couriers to Fort Griffin and elsewhere as needed for rapid communications. The men would live in tents until they could build more permanent shelters, but department headquarters wanted as little money spent on such shelters as possible. Patrols from Phantom Hill had orders to ride to a point halfway to the subpost of Fort Concho at Fort Chadbourne to the south, at least once every month. The men at Phantom Hill received permission and even encouragement to hunt often in the vicinity of the subpost and, thus, to keep the area under regular surveillance.\textsuperscript{38}

On June 13, 1871, Captain Lynde Catlin and F Company, Eleventh Infantry, plus six enlisted cavalrymen reestablished the subpost at Phantom Hill. Just a month later, however, the garrison withdrew in order to join in the campaign Mackenzie was beginning against the Kiowas.\textsuperscript{39} The following January, a garrison similar to the one withdrawn, reoccupied Phantom Hill. Two Tonkawa scouts accompanied the detachment this time.\textsuperscript{40}
Finally, on August 26, 1872, the army withdrew from Phantom Hill because the mail line moved the route from that point. Troops never permanently garrisoned the post again. Supply trains did use Phantom Hill as a temporary depot, however, during the Red River War of 1874-75.

Troops from Fort Griffin operated a picket station, closely tied in with the subpost of Phantom Hill, at Mountain Pass, the next stop southwest on the mail route. The station at Mountain Pass stood near the eastern entrance to the pass over the Abercombie range of hills. Actually the pass resembled a gradual ascent to a large, flat tableland rather than a true pass over a range. It had steep sides like a gorge through its entire one-mile length and offered excellent opportunities for ambushing any party travelling over it.

The troops stationed at Mountain Pass lived in far from comfortable conditions. At times they stayed in tents. In early 1872, the detachment made efforts to improve living conditions there. They requested building materials for troop quarters from Fort Griffin. At that time, the men lived in an uncomfortable one-room building with one door and no windows. The chimney did not carry off smoke efficiently, the building's picket walls let in plenty of cold air, and the mud and hay roof leaked. Soldiers cooked in the stage station and stored their provisions in a tent. A spring provided good water, but lack of an established
spot for a latrine threatened to pollute that water supply. Officers hoped to build a good, two-room structure to quarter the detachment, but no record exists that it was ever completed.\footnote{45}

Troops at Mount Pass had a number of skirmishes with Indians during the three years of the post's existence. On February 15, 1870, a party of seventy-five Indians struck the mail station and fought an hour-long battle with the detachment there. In the end, the Indians broke off the fight, taking five mules and a horse belonging to the stage company. Troops claimed three Indians dead.\footnote{46}

Three months later another war party ran off all the mail company's stock while the animals grazed some distance from the station.\footnote{47} In July, a party of forty recruits under Lieutenant Gilbert Overton, on the way to Fort Griffin from Concho, camped at the foot of a bluff a quarter mile from the stage station. The party travelled in four wagons, and, because they were recruits, they had only six old breech-loading rifles among them. About fifty Indians chose that day to strike the horse and mule herd, under teamster guard a short distance from the station. Private John Charlton, in immediate charge of the recruits, passed out the six rifles and told the remaining men to pick up tree branches approximately the size of guns. The Indians started to attack the soldiers' camp, but a few shots and the sight of what appeared to be a well-armed unit
frightened them off. Lieutenant Overton returned to camp from the station just in time to see the Indians ride off. Charlton eventually became a sergeant. 48

As with Phantom Hill, the army withdrew its detail from Mountain Pass on August 26, 1872, when the mail line changed its route away from those points. 49

Other small camps under Fort Griffin’s jurisdiction functioned temporarily during the main post’s years of existence. None of them remained in operation for a significant period of time. More than anything else, Griffin’s outposts helped fill the gaps between it and Fort Richardson to the northeast and Fort Concho to the southwest, and to make the mail line along that route more secure, rather than to provide in-depth protection to the entire area.
ENDNOTES


4. Rister, Fort Griffin, 65.


8. Ibid., 283-84.


10. White, "Indian Battles," 300-02.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 47.


18. Ibid., 117-19.


20. Ibid.


23. Ibid., 111-12.

24. Ibid., 141-45.


29. Fort McKavett Post Returns, January 1875, Record Group 94, National Archives (Microfilm M-617, roll 688).


32. Charles M. Robinson III, Frontier Forts of Texas (Houston: Lone Star Books, 1986), 44.

33. Post Adjutant, Fort Griffin, to Commanding Officer, F Company, Fourth Cavalry, July 2, 1869, RFGT; Rister, Fort Griffin, 68.

34. Fort Griffin Post Returns, September 1869, Record Group 94, National Archives (Microfilm M-617, roll 429).

35. Commanding Officer, Fort Griffin, to J. F. Hill, October 17, 1869; Special Orders No. 2, Headquarters, Sub-District of the Brazos, October 15, 1869, RFGT.

36. Commanding Officer, Fort Griffin, to Commanding Officer, Sub-District of the Brazos, April 27, 1870, RFGT.

37. Commanding Officer, Fort Griffin, to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Sub-District of the Brazos, May 2, 1870, RFGT.

38. H. Clay Wood to Commanding Officer, Fort Griffin, May 27, 1871; Special Orders No. 105, Headquarters, Department of Texas, May 26, 1871, RFGT.

39. Commanding Officer, Fort Griffin, to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, June 13, 1871; R. S. Mackenzie to Commanding Officer, Fort Griffin, July 13, 1871, RFGT.

40. Special Orders No. 3, Fort Griffin, January 5, 1872, RFGT.

41. W. H. Wood to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, September 2, 1872, RFGT.

42. Taylor, Indian Campaign, 127.


45. Post Adjutant, Fort Griffin, to Post Quartermaster, Fort Griffin, October 11, 1870; Commanding Officer, Subpost of Phantom Hill, to Post Adjutant, Fort Griffin, January 20, 1872; Rufus Cloud to Commanding Officer, Subpost of Phantom Hill, January 20, 1872, RFGT.

46. Commanding Officer, Fort Griffin, to J. F. Hill, February 20, 1870, RFGT.

47. Commanding Officer, Fort Griffin, to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Subdistrict of the Brazos, May 2, 1870, RFGT.


49. W. H. Wood to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, September 2, 1872, RFGT.
Near the end of the bitter campaigns on the Staked Plains during the Red River War, Colonel Nelson A. Miles recommended the army establish a post in that region to protect new cattle trails from Texas to the north and to flank the reservations of the plains tribes in Indian Territory. Fort Griffin stood too far to the southeast to provide such immediate protection and presented no obstacle to Comanches, Kiowas, and Cheyennes attempting to move west from their reservations into the Texas Panhandle.

Troops set up a temporary camp in a key location on the North Fork of the Red River in September 1874. On February 3, 1875, Major James Biddle, Sixth Cavalry, and eight companies of his regiment and the Fifth Infantry officially established a post there called Cantonment on the North Fork of the Red River. In addition to the 400 men under his command, Biddle had one mountain howitzer and a Gatling gun. He immediately put his force to work, sending Captain Adam Kramer and a three-company scout to the southwest toward the Salt Fork of the Red River. Kramer’s patrol covered 155 miles between February 15 and 27, when it returned to camp.
The following month, two companies went out on patrol. Another built a corduroy crossing over the Canadian River bottomland on the road to Camp Supply, Indian Territory. Although the post employed a number of civilian workers at that time, they all worked in service jobs rather than construction. The army delayed any building until it could choose a permanent site for the post.⁴

In June, orders came in to move the camp to a permanent location, and its garrison occupied a new spot near the head of Sweetwater Creek, thirty miles south of the Canadian River and about the same distance west of Indian Territory.⁵ The new location lay approximately 200 miles north-northwest of Fort Griffin.

About 170 men of the Nineteenth Infantry and Fourth Cavalry garrisoned the Cantonment on the Sweetwater.⁶ The troops immediately began construction of permanent buildings. Six civilian carpenters hired on during July. By the next month, sixty civilian workers were laboring at the post. The command hired eleven more carpenters and three masons in September, and the work progressed steadily. By November, the command had completed most construction and let the civilian workers go.⁷

Troops and civilians built barracks for six companies of enlisted men and quarters for a dozen officers plus a commanding officer's quarters. In addition, they constructed storehouses, a headquarters building, stables, a
post hospital, and living quarters for the laundresses always present on an army post. The building materials came by wagon from Fort Dodge, Kansas.

In February 1876, military authorities changed the name of the post to Fort Elliott, in honor of Major Joel Elliott, killed in action with hostile Indians during the Battle of the Washita on November 27, 1868. During that fight a short distance east of the fort in Indian Territory, Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer and elements of his Seventh Cavalry Regiment destroyed the Cheyenne village of Chief Black Kettle in a winter attack. Custer detached Elliott and about twenty men to block Indian escape routes and watch the movements of other tribes in the vicinity. An overwhelming force of Indians caught Elliott's command and wiped it out.

Fort Elliott's garrison performed a variety of missions. During its first few months, the fort served as a base for scouts against hostile Indians in the Panhandle. In addition, troops from the post protected not only the cattle trails north to Kansas, but even Indian parties with legal permission to hunt on the Staked Plains. As early as August 1875, patrols went in pursuit of cattle thieves, a task that continued to demand the garrison's attention at various times over the next few years. On October 20, a detachment arrived at the fort with five civilian prisoners, arrested in possession of a herd of government horses and
mules. The troops took those prisoners on to Fort Sill a few days later to face charges.\textsuperscript{11} Two months later thirteen cavalrymen set out from the post after thieves who had stolen horses from Kiowa Indians on their reservation.\textsuperscript{12}

The Battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana, in which Lieutenant Colonel Custer and over 200 of his regiment died, affected the garrison at Fort Elliott to a limited extent. Captain Clarence Mauck, commanding the post and B Company, Fourth Cavalry, led that company out of Fort Elliott in July, a few days after the battle, bound for Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory.\textsuperscript{13} In October, Lieutenant A. H. M. Taylor shepherded a party of recruits through the fort and on toward Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to replenish the decimated Seventh Cavalry.\textsuperscript{14}

Routine matters and local crises rather than the war against the Sioux dominated activities at Fort Elliott, however. With most of the cavalry away on detached service on the northern plains or closer to home, the predominantly infantry garrison improved the post and enforced law and order. The command dug a well to supplement the water supply at the beginning of 1877. In early spring a small infantry detachment and one civilian guide left the post in pursuit of the outlaw, John Bottom, and his gang and stolen government property in their possession. The patrol
returned several days later after killing Bottom and travelling 260 miles.¹⁵

Indian problems had not disappeared entirely at Elliott by that time, despite the defeat of the southern plains tribes three years earlier in the Red River War. On May 6, 1877, Indians reportedly burned a Mr. McKama’s trading post on the Brazos near the town of Reynolds.¹⁶ A sizeable cavalry force returned to the post late in the summer, increasing its striking power in the event of a new outbreak of fighting, but the fort’s howitzer and Gatling gun left for another location.¹⁷

In September, over eighty men of the Fourth Cavalry rode out of Fort Elliott to round up a band of hostile Cheyennes who had left their reservation. The detachment did not return until two months later. At the same time, an infantry company marched to the village of Clarenden about fifty miles southwest of the fort on detached service.¹⁸

Another factor tended to aggravate the Indian situation in Fort Elliot’s region during the same period. Texas cattlemen began to drive more and more of their herds north through the Panhandle rather than over the Chisholm Trail farther east. That shift placed a greater burden on the garrison at Fort Elliott to protect the herds and brought an increased possibility for trouble between civilian cattlemen and Indians.¹⁹
Fort Elliott stood in prime buffalo country. By the late 1870s, after hunters had virtually eliminated the buffalo, ranchers ran cattle on the Panhandle's open ranges. Indians from the Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne reservations in Indian Territory still filtered across the boundary line into Texas to hunt and sometimes came into conflict with cattlemen and other whites.20

A party of Texas Rangers under Captain G. W. Arrington moved into the Panhandle in the winter of 1878-79 in response to reports of hostile Indian incursions. Troops out of Fort Elliott patrolled the plains at the same time with orders to protect whites from Indians but to allow legitimate Indian hunting parties to take game. One such patrol under Captain Nicholas Nolan came upon Arrington's Rangers as they prepared to attack an Indian camp. The troops stopped the Rangers and allowed the hunting party to continue unmolested.21

Friction between the Rangers and troops from Fort Elliott continued into the following summer, with similar incidents occurring. Finally, Lieutenant Colonel John W. Davidson, commanding officer at Elliott, reported the situation to Texas Governor O. M. Roberts. From that time on Rangers offered no more trouble to legitimate Indian hunting parties.22

Not all bands of Indians reported to be on the Staked Plains had permission to be off the reservation. Troops
from Fort Elliott engaged in two major scouts after such groups in the spring of 1879. In April, twenty troopers of the Tenth Cavalry covered the area as far as Clarenden and Palo Duro Canyon in search of hostile Indians, but they found none.\textsuperscript{23} The following month Captain Nicholas Nolan and H Company of the same regiment went out in pursuit of a party of Comanches said to be moving toward the Staked Plains from Fort Sill. Nolan’s men had an advantage that many earlier cavalry columns did not have, in that grass was plentiful at the time. They had no need to carry much forage. Other supplies had to come in by wagon from forts Concho and Griffin, however, so the patrol could not operate completely unhampered by a supply line.\textsuperscript{24}

During the same spring, Fort Elliott maintained a small outpost at Symer’s Ranch. A detachment of A Company, Tenth Cavalry, under a sergeant’s command garrisoned the ranch. Quartermasters also used the ranch as a small forage depot for supplying patrols in the field.\textsuperscript{25}

In order to deal with Indian hunting parties visiting the area more and more frequently, Lieutenant Colonel Davidson suggested to Department of the Missouri headquarters in June 1879 that funds be allocated for an interpreter. The post already had a civilian guide, but with an overall decrease in Indian raids in the region and growing familiarity with the area among his officers, Davidson believed that the man’s services were no longer
essential. The government could save seventy-five dollars per month by dispensing with the guide and use that money toward the one hundred dollar monthly salary Davidson wished to pay an interpreter. The colonel proposed hiring a man named George Fox for the new job. Department headquarters agreed to Davidson’s proposal a few days later, and Fox hired on as post interpreter. The command released William Dixon, experienced scout and buffalo hunter, from employment as guide. Two months later, however, Captain Nolan, temporary commanding officer at Fort Elliott, requested that he be rehired.

Demands from several quarters strained Fort Elliot’s limited manpower in the fall. A detail of nine men worked with the United States Marshal investigating thefts of livestock in Indian Territory. A detachment of thirty stayed busy for many weeks building a telegraph line connecting the fort to other posts. Only two officers and twenty enlisted men remained to carry out the fort’s regular duties of patrol and escort.

In December, a new commanding officer, Captain R. I. Eskridge, rode out with a guide, an interpreter, and three enlisted men to investigate trouble along the boundary line between Texas and Indian Territory. A cowboy had reported being attacked by Indians, but Eskridge found only a few small bands of Kiowas and Delawares hunting without permits in the area and could not determine if they were responsible
for the attack. A larger party of Comanches did have a permit to hunt, and he took some of them to Fort Elliott to give them rations and let them identify stock stolen from their reservation earlier and recovered by the marshal.\textsuperscript{30}

As Indian troubles diminished further, troops at Fort Elliott concentrated more and more on improving roads and communications between their post and other forts and on enforcing the law. Scouts continued, and detachments went out whenever reports of trouble came in, but those reports became fewer and fewer. In all of 1879, Indians had killed only one settler in the fort's area of responsibility and had stolen just a few horses and cattle.\textsuperscript{31}

Although actual danger seldom threatened soldiers at Fort Elliott, duty there remained far from pleasant because of the remoteness of the post. The garrison regarded a visit by an officer from another post to be a special occasion worthy of a celebration.\textsuperscript{32}

Commanding officers of the post made a special effort to provide basic forms of recreation for the men under their command. A post library furnished various books and periodicals.\textsuperscript{33} After the library and headquarters building mysteriously burned on February 27, 1879, the command took steps to replace it with a larger, better structure housing a school and chapel in addition to the library.\textsuperscript{34} The post established a school for those men who wished to improve their education and detailed one member of the garrison to
serve as teacher. That man, a Private Moncrief, received the special privilege of exemption from all roll calls except reveille, in recognition of his service benefitting his fellow soldiers. Additional efforts by the command to make life more pleasant for the men of the post included providing better food. Toward that end the post planted an orchard of 1000 peach trees.

Fort Elliott remained an active post well after danger from the Indian tribes of the southern plains had passed. The presence of troops in the Panhandle helped stabilize the area during its transition from wilderness to a settled ranching area. In that period Fort Elliott had the distinction of being virtually the only post in Texas to protect Indians from whites as well as whites from Indians. The garrison served as much in the role of a police force as it did a military force. The army closed the post in October 1890.
ENDNOTES


3. Fort Elliott (Cantonment on North Fork of Red River) Post Returns, February 1875, Record Group 94, National Archives (Microfilm M-617, roll 346).

4. Ibid., March 1875.


6. Fort Elliott (Cantonment on the Sweetwater) Post Returns, June 1875.

7. Ibid., July-November 1875.


11. Fort Elliott Post Returns, July-October 1875.

12. Ibid., December 1875.

13. Ibid., July 1876.

14. Ibid., October 1876.

15. Ibid., November 1876-April 1877.


17. Fort Elliott Post Returns, August 1877.

18. Ibid., September-November 1878.

19. Homer K. Davidson, Black Jack Davidson, A Cavalry Commander on the Western Frontier: The Life of General John


22. Ibid., 228-29.

23. Fort Elliott Post Returns, April 1879.

24. Ibid., Special Orders No. 93, Headquarters, Fort Elliott, May 17, 1879.

25. George Read to Post Quartermaster, April 26, 1879, Records of Fort Elliott, Texas, Record Group 393, National Archives (hereafter cited as RFET) (Microfilm in possession of Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, West Texas A&M University, Canyon, Texas).

26. J. W. Davidson to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Missouri, June 12, 1879, RFET.

27. Charles Cooper to Post Quartermaster, Fort Elliott, June 25, 1879, RFET.

28. Nicholas Nolan to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Missouri, August 18, 1879, RFET.

29. Ibid., October 10, 1879, RFET.

30. R. I. Eskridge to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Missouri, December 8, 1879, RFET.

31. Ibid., January 8, 1880; January 11, 1880; January 23, 1880, RFET. Edward Hatch to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Missouri, April 5, 1880, RFET.


33. Charles Cooper to Quartermaster General, United States Army, May 27, 1879; Nicholas Nolan to Quartermaster General, United States Army, October 10, 1879, RFET.

34. Edward Hatch to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Missouri, February 27, 1879; W. A. Nichols to O. L. Wirting, November 18, 1879, RFET.
35. George Read to E. S. Liscum, March 18, 1879, RFET.

36. S. Allen Byrd to Quartermaster General, United States Army, October 11, 1879, RFET.

Of all the posts on the Texas frontier, Fort Concho held the most central location. It stood within striking distance of the Staked Plains to the northwest and the arid trans-Pecos region of the Apache to the west. That location gave Fort Concho the opportunity to halt north-south Indian movement and thus interrupt raiding patterns of some of the most warlike of the tribes that menaced Texas settlements. The fort’s position also allowed it to protect a major portion of the mail route to the west.

As soon as the army returned to the Texas frontier after the Civil War, military commanders attempted to establish and maintain a fort within the general geographic area of the branches of the Concho River. At first, they chose to reoccupy old Fort Chadbourne, a pre-war post on the mail route to El Paso. In the spring of 1867, elements of the Fourth Cavalry rode into the old fort and pitched camp. Soon over 300 men garrisoned the post.¹

Problems soon arose over the fort’s water supply, however, prompting district headquarters to choose a different location for the region’s main post. Reports from
FORT CONCHO AND ASSOCIATED SITES

Figure 11
scouting expeditions in the field and a study of the main
transportation routes across West Texas convinced military
leaders that a spot near the confluence of the different
branches of the Concho River and its tributaries would prove
to be the best site. That location ensured a permanent
supply of water more than adequate to meet the needs of men
and animals at the new post. In addition, it covered the
crossroads of the San Antonio-El Paso Road, the Overland
Mail route, and the increasingly popular Goodnight-Loving
Trail running northwest to New Mexico and Colorado.²

In late November 1867, Captain G. G. Hunt and a small
detachment from Fort Chadbourne established the camp that
became Fort Concho. A few days later he officially
transferred his headquarters from Chadbourne to the new
post, which he named Camp Hatch in honor of Major John Hatch
of the Fourth Cavalry. The following February, authorities
changed the name of the post to Fort Concho.³

Permanent buildings rose slowly at Concho. Remote as
the post was, construction materials had to come in by ox
cart over a route hundreds of miles in length. To make
matters worse, the army found that stone was the proper
material for construction only after lengthy experimentation
using adobe. Nevertheless, the fort eventually took
shape.⁴

Troops stationed at Fort Concho sometimes came into
conflict with a rough lot of civilians in the town of Saint
Angela, which grew up across the river during the fort's early years. That problem became particularly troublesome during times when black troops garrisoned the fort. In late 1877, Saint Angela witnessed a shooting spree by a party of Texas Rangers in one of the town's saloons. Angered that black soldiers were dancing with the same girls and drinking in the same room, the Rangers ran the unarmed troops out in a hail of bullets. No one suffered injury that time.

Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, in command of Concho at the time, called for an apology by the Rangers but never received one. Several months later a rowdy group of cowboys and buffalo hunters cut up a black sergeant's uniform, with him in it, at one of the saloons in town. Several troopers obtained weapons at the post and returned to the saloon. In the gunfight that followed, one man on each side died, and three suffered wounds. The murder of a black soldier by a drunken rancher in Saint Angela three years later led to a major riot by troops and the threat of deadly force in retaliation by a Texas Ranger company despatched to the trouble spot.

Fort Concho did offer certain pleasures to its garrison, especially to officers and their families. Many of them enjoyed the dry, expansive countryside around the fort and its abundance of fish and game. Also, at various times throughout the year, soldiers and their families found
opportunity to celebrate at weddings, holidays, and parties.

A number of outstanding officers commanded Fort Concho. Those included Colonel Ranald Mackenzie, Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Shafter, and Colonel Grierson. The fort became a staging and support base for a number of offensive expeditions against hostile tribes, including Mackenzie's and Shafter's thrusts onto the Llano Estacado in the early and mid-1870s.

Fort Concho's role in protecting and pacifying the region around it proved more significant, however, than its contributions to those faraway campaigns. For that purpose it maintained a number of subposts and picket stations to extend its control far beyond the vicinity of the fort itself and to provide bases for far-ranging patrols in search of Indian marauders.

Troops from Fort Concho garrisoned several stations on or near the mail route during the early years of the fort's existence. Those included old Fort Chadbourne, Camp Colorado, Centralia Station, Johnson's Station, Head of the Concho, and old Camp Charlotte. During the late 1870s, the command established subposts at three points to serve as base camps for scouting operations and escorts and to control key water sources in the arid region west of the post. Those subposts included the new Camp Charlotte, a scouting camp at the Head of the North Concho, and
Grierson's Spring. In addition, the fort used temporary outposts at other points when they became necessary.

Old Fort Chadbourne, as stated previously, had served as an important post on the frontier line before the Civil War but had lacked the permanent water supply necessary for retention as a major fort following the end of that conflict. Although its main garrison moved to Fort Concho in 1867, Chadbourne's location made it valuable as a picket post for a few men. The troops remaining there provided escorts and protection to the mail station and to the coaches that carried the mail.⁸

Fort Concho's picket stations usually held men on a temporary basis whenever circumstances made it necessary or desirable. In the fall of 1869, however, the command ordered that three of its stations, including Fort Chadbourne, be permanently garrisoned.⁹ Chadbourne's detachment consisted of one noncommissioned officer and six privates.¹⁰ The size of the garrison fluctuated slightly over the next two years but remained small. In March 1871, the station held one corporal and three privates.¹¹

At the end of May, however, new orders came through from the Department of Texas establishing Fort Chadbourne as a full-fledged subpost of Fort Concho. An entire company of the Eleventh Infantry plus a cavalry detachment of seven men from the Fourth Cavalry made up the garrison.¹² Troops at Fort Chadbourne had responsibility for protecting the mail
station and stages as before, but now had the additional task of patrolling the mail route for considerable distances on a regular schedule. Those patrols had to travel the route north to the picket station at Mountain Pass, a point halfway to Phantom Hill, at least once every month. A similar patrol from Phantom Hill covered the other half of the route, from their subpost to Mountain Pass.¹³

That arrangement did not last long, because Mackenzie's expeditions against the Kiowas and then the Comanches pulled most of the troops from the newly established subposts. From the summer of 1871 on, only small details of soldiers served at Fort Chadbourne on a temporary basis to guard the mail line.

Beginning in 1869, Fort Concho maintained a few troops at Camp Colorado, about eighty miles northeast of the fort and sixty miles due east of Fort Chadbourne. The camp stood upstream of Brownwood on Jim Ned Creek, a tributary of the Colorado River, in Coleman County. The army had established Camp Colorado before the Civil War, but after the war it never attained great importance as a military post. Some state forces, such as Texas Ranger units, also used the camp as a base of operations.¹⁴ During 1875, work details of soldiers linked Camp Colorado to forts Concho and Griffin by a military telegraph line.¹⁵

Centralia Station stood on the mail route to El Paso about seventy miles west of Fort Concho and up on the
southern reaches of the Staked Plains. Troops from the fort under Major Joseph Rendelbrock's command established a picket station there in the summer of 1868. Ben Ficklin, running the mail line in that part of the state, helped supply the picket post during its early weeks of operation. Fort Concho or its outposts kept small details of men at Centralia Station much of the time over the next years. At least as late as 1880, detachments guarded the station and the mail coaches that used it. Only when the Indian danger had definitely passed did the army permanently withdraw its men.

The mail relay point at Johnson's Station, sometimes referred to as Johnston's Station, had much in common with Centralia. Troops garrisoned it during the same period, and it functioned as a picket station for guarding the mail line. The same order that established a permanent military presence at the picket post of Fort Chadbourne in late 1869, applied to Johnson's Station as well. The small garrison built permanent quarters for themselves. The building had a pole roof covered with mud or unformed adobe. From that vantage point a sentry could watch both the military stable and the one belonging to the mail company.

Johnson's Station stood on the south bank of the Main Concho River at a point on the mail route about twenty-five miles west of Fort Concho. By December 1869, the garrison there consisted of one noncommissioned officer and
four privates. A band of Indians on a small winter raid hit the station just before Christmas. They ran off five cavalry horses named Tobe, Texas, Joe, Bill, and Billy.

The raid provoked a quick reaction from Fort Concho. Fifty troopers rode out in pursuit of the raiders on Christmas Day. On the administrative side, a board of survey convened to determine who was officially responsible for the loss and if there was any financial accountability. To forestall further raids, the command later despatched heavy reinforcements to Johnson's Station. A lieutenant with two sergeants, two corporals, and twenty-three privates of E Company, Ninth Cavalry, plus a hospital attendant, headed for the station. They planned to stay for at least a month, scouting the region vigorously for hostile bands.

The command at Fort Concho continued to keep small details at Johnson's Station through the mid-1870s. Sometimes the men remained there for a thirty-day period, but occasionally they had duty of sixty days or more at the isolated post.

The mail station known as Head of the Concho stood on the mail route at the head of the Middle Concho River almost exactly between Johnson's Station to the east and Centralia Station to the west, and about twenty-eight miles from each. Beginning in late April 1868, one company from Fort Concho occupied the station for a three-month period. Other units continued to garrison Head of the Concho on a
temporary basis through the next few months until orders came through making the station permanent.\textsuperscript{24} To house the permanent garrison, troops built a fortified stone structure thirty feet long by ten feet wide. The building had two rooms, one for the men and the other to serve as a stable.\textsuperscript{25} One sergeant, one corporal, six infantry privates, and two mounted cavalry privates manned the station. The men had plenty of ammunition in case of a serious fight—\textit{one} hundred rounds each, plus another thousand as a general reserve in the station building. They served a forty-day tour at Head of the Concho before being relieved.\textsuperscript{26} Captain George Gamble, commanding Fort Concho, had the option of stationing up to twenty-five additional cavalry at the picket post to scout actively after Indians in the vicinity.\textsuperscript{27}

Troops continued to occupy the mail station at Head of the Concho through 1879.\textsuperscript{28} They suffered from Indian raids on some occasions, especially night attacks targeting the animals of the garrison and the stage company.\textsuperscript{29} The small detail at the station primarily guarded it and provided escort to the coaches travelling the mail route. Larger cavalry forces periodically used Head of the Concho as a base camp for extensive scouts, however, when conditions required.\textsuperscript{30}

Camp Charlotte began as a picket station of Fort Concho on the mail route and eventually became a regular subpost.
Troops from the fort established Camp Charlotte in April 1868, on the south bank of the Middle Concho just below the mouth of Kiowa Creek. They built an impressive log stockade measuring 190 feet by 115 feet, bastioned at each corner, around the stables. Tents inside the stockade housed the enlisted men of the garrison, while officers' quarters and the guard house stood outside the walls.  

Units at Camp Charlotte protected the mail line but also served in other capacities. Even before the army officially established the camp, troops used it as a base from which they escorted cattle herds moving west into the trans-Pecos country and on to New Mexico. Huge numbers of cattle passed through the region in the late 1860s and the 1870s, presenting a tempting target to Indians. Often Comanche war parties stole cattle and drove them to secret meeting points on the Staked Plains where they traded them to New Mexican Comancheros for guns and ammunition. Sometimes Indian bands managed to run off the remuda, or horse herd, of a cattle outfit on the trail or even the horses of the military escort guarding the herd. One such attack in the fall of 1872 took troopers by surprise just three miles from Camp Charlotte.  

Although most hostile activity by Comanches and their allied tribes in the north had stopped by the mid-1870s, attacks from Apaches and, occasionally, Kickapoos from the south and west increased in the latter years of the decade.
Because of those attacks, the army posted more troops to Camp Charlotte and other points west of Fort Concho, particularly Grierson's Spring and the Head of the North Concho River.

Between 1878 and 1882, Camp Charlotte functioned primarily as a subpost of Fort Concho for thorough scouting and patrol of the region. On one such scout, typical of those launched from the post during that period, Lieutenant M. F. Eggleston rode out with fifteen enlisted men and a civilian guide named Monroe to find a party of Indians who had stolen livestock from a nearby ranch. Monroe found the Indians' trail an hour after the command reached the site of the attack, though the Indians had tried to obliterate it. The troops marched forty-five miles in pursuit that first day.\(^34\)

The next day a few cowboys joined the command. Eggleston thought the Indians, seven or eight Apaches, were bound for the Head of the North Concho, so he sent word to the detachment there to watch for the war party. The Indians slipped past that detachment during the night. Eggleston had them follow the Indians while he angled across to the west to cut off the latter from Fort Stanton and the Sand Hills. Somehow the Apaches eluded both columns, and Eggleston's command returned to Camp Charlotte a few days later after their rations had run out. They had marched 241 miles in seven days.\(^35\)
In addition to grueling and usually unsuccessful scouts and pursuits, men at Camp Charlotte spent a great deal of time and energy building roads and telegraph lines to link the various posts in the region. Road building involved not only clearing and grading new routes through the rocky, arid countryside, but also shortening existing roads and improving them. Troops used blasting powder with great effect to decrease steep grades and remove boulders. Sheer muscle power sufficed to clear out smaller rocks, rubble, and stumps. Because many of the original roads had far more curves than necessary, working parties reduced travel distances between points by cutting corners, straightening out those routes wherever possible. Where runoff tended to wash soil and gravel across a roadway, men used the native stone for low retaining walls. Eventually, these improvements resulted in roads easier to travel even for fully loaded wagons.\textsuperscript{36}

Troops made similar improvements in old telegraph lines and, where no previous lines existed, built new ones. They cut wire into half-mile lengths at the camp and hauled it by wagon to the stretch of road where it was to be used. Men dug holes for the poles by hand, normally three and one-half to four feet deep.\textsuperscript{37} By the early spring of 1881, the military telegraph line ran from San Antonio through Fort Concho, Camp Charlotte, and Grierson’s Spring to Fort Stockton and beyond. Grierson’s Spring had a station and an
operator, but Camp Charlotte had neither. Such work on road and telegraph probably did more to remove the Indian threat in the region than the more active measures of scouting and pursuit.

By the late summer of 1882, little need remained for Camp Charlotte. With the threat of Indian attack in the area virtually gone, the Department of Texas ordered the outpost abandoned.

During the period from 1879 to 1882, troops from Fort Concho maintained a subpost at the Head of the North Concho River (not to be confused with the picket station known as Head of the Concho, discussed previously, on the Middle Concho River). Patrols camped on or near the site at least as early as 1872, but units from Fort Concho did not establish a permanent outpost until later. Local settlers sometimes referred to the outpost as Camp Elizabeth.

In response to repeated Indian incursions west of Fort Concho, D Company, Tenth Cavalry, established the subpost at the Head of the North Concho near the end of July 1879. The company had orders to scout north, west, and south from that camp for hostile Indians and to spare neither men nor horses in pressing a vigorous pursuit of any Indians seen.

The army kept troops at Head of the North Concho continuously through the remainder of 1879, 1880, and 1881. In midsummer 1881, a new, more subtle danger
threatened the men at Head of the North Concho when a trader named Jackson set up a camp next to the subpost and began to sell whiskey and tobacco to the garrison. Lieutenant Calvin Esterly stepped in quickly to eliminate this threat to good order and discipline at his outpost. He placed an armed sentry between the military camp and Jackson’s site to stop any traffic between the two. He also reported the trader’s activities to Colonel Benjamin Grierson, who passed on the information to the county sheriff.  

During the subpost’s three most active years, the command continually tried to make it more comfortable for the garrison. They replaced some of the crude picket shelters there with small stone houses that stayed drier and had fewer bugs. Fort Concho supplied shingles and lumber for roofing the temporary buildings at the outpost. For better meals the garrison brought in a field oven.  

Head of the North Concho served primarily as a cavalry base camp. Troops often rotated between it, Camp Charlotte, and the subpost at Grierson’s Spring. In late fall 1881, the Department of Texas shifted the supply point providing forage for the cavalry horses at North Concho to the growing town of Big Spring. That move made it much easier to supply the subpost.  

Shortly after the supply shift, however, military authorities decided to abandon Head of the North Concho. Colonel Grierson favored such a move because he believed the
subpost's usefulness had passed with the virtual end of Indian raids in the area. Finally, in November 1882, the last troops there permanently evacuated the post and returned to Fort Concho.

The arid country west of Fort Concho contained numerous springs, but their location often remained a mystery to the white man unless accident or dogged exploration finally revealed them. In May 1878, two cattlemen discovered a flowing spring in a small canyon on a direct line between Camp Charlotte and Pecos Bridge. The two men, W. L. Riggs and M. N. Wilkins, shared their information with Lieutenant Mason M. Maxon a few days later, and Maxon noted the location of the water hole for military use. Eventually, the site acquired the name, Grierson's Spring, after the colonel in charge of the army's District of the Pecos.

Colonel Grierson realized that control of the water sources in that dry area could prove decisive in making it safe from Indian raids. To that end, he ordered his patrols out of Fort Concho to make every effort to locate and record all water holes that they came across. Grierson's Spring, located twenty-eight miles southwest of the stage station at Head of the (Middle) Concho, stood in a perfect location for providing water to travellers following a direct line between that point or Camp Charlotte and the Pecos Bridge near Fort Lancaster. No road existed between those points, but Grierson's troops built one, along with
many others connecting virtually all of the army's far flung outposts in the region. Thus, Grierson's Spring combined the two essential elements of the colonel's strategy for pacification of the region—control of all water sources and connection of all military posts by a series of roads.

Troops erected permanent stone buildings at Grierson's Spring over an extended period. During the summer of 1879, Lieutenant James Pratt directed the construction of quarters ten feet by thirty feet, suitable for officers or enlisted men. The following winter and spring, soldiers at Grierson's Spring completed a stone corral and stables as well as a guard house. The guard house had two rooms, each twelve feet square. All buildings had thatched roofs. The command obtained timber for the construction in Lancaster Canyon, twelve miles south of the post.

Other construction efforts occupied a considerable part of the garrison's energies. Troops from the post continually repaired wagon roads leading to other sites and worked to reduce the distance between points by straightening routes. Lieutenant Pratt, in addition to his work on buildings, installed a large water pump to make better use of the flow from the spring. Many soldiers at Grierson's Spring helped build and repair military telegraph lines. In the spring of 1879, working parties rerouted the old line that had followed the stage road between Head of
Grierson's Spring
(From an exploration conducted 10 March 1991)

Figure 12
Grierson's Spring
Details of Buildings
Scale: 1 inch = 30 feet

Building "A" 22' rough stone

Building "C" 15' dressed stone-mortared

Building "E" 15' 10'

Building "D" 18' 21' 51' 42' 42'
dressed  stone

rough  stone

Figure 13
the Concho and the Pecos River to a new run from Camp Charlotte southwest to the Pecos via Grierson’s Spring. By changing the route, they cut the length of the line from seventy-two miles to fifty-eight miles.\textsuperscript{58}

The area around Grierson’s Spring proved to be dangerous on occasion, more from the weather than from hostile Indians. The spring itself formed the head of a watershed from the Staked Plains. The small canyon where the spring surfaced caught water draining from the limestone plateau above it.\textsuperscript{59}

That type of watershed frequently channeled a flash flood in periods of heavy rain. One officer in the region lost his family to such a torrent, and many scouting columns had animals and camp equipage washed away. Other forms of violent weather also struck the area at times. In 1879, a savage hail storm hit Grierson’s Spring just as the animals of the command finished watering. Although soldiers held each animal securely by the bridle, the hail came down so hard and heavy that the frightened horses and mules broke free and stampeded down the canyon. The men had to follow on foot. They recovered all of the animals, but only after a miserable and dangerous night and morning of hard work.\textsuperscript{60}

Another severe storm hit in July of the following year. Rushing water damaged the cisterns at the spring and washed out sections of the road nearby, and high winds blew down walls on some of the buildings.\textsuperscript{61}
Scouting for hostile Indians remained the primary responsibility of units stationed at Grierson's Spring throughout its existence. Troops from the subpost covered the area west to the Pecos, south to Fort Lancaster, and north to Centralia Station and Castle Gap. Those units did their work well and relentlessly closed off the area from Indian incursions. By the spring of 1882, Colonel Grierson recommended that the subpost be abandoned, as it was no longer needed. That fall, the last troops transferred out of Grierson's Spring.

At the same time that he called for the abandonment of Grierson's Spring, Colonel Grierson also recommended closing Fort Concho itself. If that did not happen, he suggested establishing a subpost near the new railroad line that crossed the region. Deep Creek, sometimes called Calvert's Creek, seemed best among the possible locations for that two-company post. The site lay 110 miles northwest of Fort Concho and twenty miles above Colorado City. He recommended that an additional one-company outpost from that camp be located at Gold Greek, some forty miles northwest of the railroad. Both spots had good grass, water, and timber, and would give the army excellent central locations from which to patrol the surrounding region. As it turned out, however, the Department of Texas decided against the new outposts. Fort Concho itself lingered on for a few years but finally closed in 1889.
The outposts of Fort Concho proved more effective in countering the Indian threat than those of most other Texas forts. Concho's picket stations, of course, performed no better than similar stations elsewhere in guarding mail stops and stagecoaches. The main subposts in the late 1870s and early 1880s, however, achieved a degree of success rare on the state's frontier.

The reason for that success lay in the strategy worked out by Colonel Grierson and his subordinates. That strategy included knowledge of the region, especially its limited water sources, a network of roads between virtually all outposts, a military telegraph providing much better command and control than the army had achieved before, and continuous, coordinated patrols.

Departing from the earlier use of patrols as a tactic purely for defense of an isolated locality, Grierson used multiple scouting parties as one element in a comprehensive plan to locate, engage, and punish any raiding party that dared to threaten his district.

Granted, the strategy did not keep every band of raiders out of the region. In addition, units at the subposts or out on patrol still rarely saw a hostile Indian. Service at Fort Concho and its outposts consisted primarily, as the military adage goes, of days and days of incredible boredom punctuated by occasional moments of stark terror.
when the enemy made a brief appearance. Nevertheless, eventual success did come with the new strategy.
ENDNOTES


2. Ibid., 128.


4. Ibid., 136-143.

5. Ibid., 274.

6. Ibid., 274-82.


9. Ibid., 157.

10. Special Orders No. 145, Fort Concho, November 22, 1869, Records of Headquarters, Fort Concho, Texas, Record Group 393, National Archives (hereafter referred to as RHFCFT) (Microfilm in possession of Fort Concho National Historic Landmark).

11. Special Orders No. 76, Fort Concho, March 25, 1871, RHFCFT.

12. Special Orders No. 129, Fort Concho, May 31, 1871, RHFCFT.

13. H. Clay Wood to Commanding Officer, Fort Griffin, May 27, 1871, Records of Fort Griffin, Texas, Record Group 393, National Archives (Microfilm in possession of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department).


15. Special Orders No. 156, Fort Concho, August 1, 1875, RHFCFT.

17. Cyrus Gray to Post Adjutant, *Fort Concho*, May 20, 1880, RHFCT.


20. Special Orders No. 162, *Fort Concho*, December 22, 1869; Special Orders No. 164, *Fort Concho*, December 25, 1869; Special Orders No. 170, *Fort Concho*, December 30, 1869, RHFCT.

21. Special Orders No. 164, *Fort Concho*, December 25, 1869; Special Orders No. 170, *Fort Concho*, December 30, 1869; Special Orders No. 41, *Fort Concho*, March 27, 1870, RHFCT.

22. Special Orders No. 77, *Fort Concho*, March 26, 1871; Special Orders No. 227, *Fort Concho*, October 25, 1874; Special Orders No. 175, *Fort Concho*, September 3, 1875, RHFCT.


25. Ibid., 157.

26. Special Orders No. 133, *Fort Concho*, October 19, 1869, RHFCT.


28. Special Orders No. 227, *Fort Concho*, October 25, 1874; Special Orders No. 167, *Fort Concho*, August 23, 1875; R. G. Smither to Henry Williams, March 26, 1879, RHFCT.

29. Eugene Driscoll to Post Adjutant, *Fort Concho*, August 20, 1875, RHFCT.

30. R. G. Smither to Commanding Officer, D Company, Tenth Cavalry, April 22, 1877, RHFCT.


33. A. L. Myer to W. C. Hemphill, October 21, 1872, RHFCT.

34. M. F. Eggleston to Commanding Officer, Camp Charlotte, August 2, 1879, RHFCT.

35. Ibid.

36. James H. Lane to John W. French, November 25, 1879, RHFCT.

37. J. Law to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Pecos, April 25, 1879, RHFCT.


39. A. Haugh to Adjutant General, Department of Texas, August 24, 1882, RHFCT.

40. J. Rendelbrock to I. M. Starr, February 20, 1872, RHFCT.


42. R. G. Smither to Commanding Officer, E Company, Tenth Cavalry, July 28, 1879, RHFCT.

43. R. G. Smither to Post Quartermaster, Fort Concho, August 22, 1880; E. H. Grierson to Commanding Officer, F Company, Sixteenth Infantry, February 21, 1881, RHFCT.

44. J. O. Shelby to Calvin Esterly, July 30, 1881, RHFCT.


46. C. R. Tyler to Post Quartermaster, Fort Concho, July 18, 1882, RHFCT.

47. J. O. Shelby to P. L. Lee, October 30, 1881, RHFCT.

48. A. Haugh to Adjutant General, Department of Texas, August 24, 1882, RHFCT.

49. J. O. Shelby to Commanding Officer, Head of the North Concho, November 30, 1881, RHFCT.
50. B. H. Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, April 5, 1882, RHFCT.

51. Lieutenant Allen, Acting Post Adjutant, Fort Concho, to Commanding Officer, C Company, Sixteenth Infantry, November 11, 1882, RHFCT.

52. M. M. Maxon, "Twenty Years in the Saddle: Reminiscences of His Military Experience 1869 to 1889," Maxon Family Papers, Fort Davis National Historic Site.


54. Maxon, "Twenty Years."


56. Cyrus Gray to Post Adjutant, Fort Concho, May 20, 1880, RHFCT.

57. R. G. Smither to Post Quartermaster, Fort Concho, April 18, 1879, RHFCT.

58. J. Law to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Pecos, April 25, 1879, RHFCT.

59. William B. Kennedy to Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Pecos, October 15, 1878, RHFCT.

60. Maxon, "Twenty Years."

61. William Black to Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Pecos, October 20, 1880, RHFCT.

62. R. G. Smither to Commanding Officer, E Company, Tenth Cavalry, July 28, 1879, RHFCT.

63. B. H. Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, April 5, 1882, RHFCT.

64. A. Haugh to Adjutant General, Department of Texas, August 24, 1882, RHFCT.

65. B. H. Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, April 5, 1882, RHFCT.

CHAPTER 10

FORT DAVIS AND ITS OUTPOSTS

Whereas the army located most of its major posts along the edge of the frontier facing outward toward unpacified territory but with settlements behind, it placed Fort Davis in the very middle of the Apaches' domain. A person riding out of the fort faced great potential danger for a hundred miles or more in every direction. For that reason, Fort Davis stood as a citadel of protection for ranchers and travellers in the region it occupied.

The United States Army had built Fort Davis in the 1850s but evacuated it on the eve of the Civil War. On July 1, 1867, the military returned. Lieutenant Colonel Wesley Merritt led four companies of the Ninth Cavalry back onto the post, the first federal troops there for seven years. Sheer cliffs and steep, rocky mountains overshadowing the fort on two sides caused Merritt to remark on the potential danger from Indians posted on those heights.1 Nearby Limpia Creek provided a permanent source of good water to the post.

Merritt and his troops enjoyed the scenery and healthy climate at Fort Davis, but other conditions made their
Figure 14
situation difficult. The command had to rebuild the fort, most of which had been burned during the Civil War. In addition, the lack of fresh vegetables caused a major outbreak of scurvy among the garrison in 1868. Merritt had to train his troops virtually from scratch. Also, because ex-slaves comprised almost the entire regiment, a great shortage existed in literate soldiers, men capable of handling paperwork and administrative duties.²

The companies at Fort Davis had little trouble from Indians during the first year.³ For the next three years after that, raids and small-scale attacks increased, drawing the army’s attention to the Big Bend area in particular. Vigorous action by Lieutenant Colonel William R. Shafter and units from Fort Davis and the posts to the east, however, forced an end to the worst depredations by the end of the summer of 1871.⁴

Much of the work of troops at Fort Davis consisted of patrol and protection of the mail route running past the fort from San Antonio and Fort Stockton to El Paso and points farther west. Although the Comanche War Trail passed through much of the region covered by Fort Davis, the majority of Indian raids on isolated ranches and on coaches along the mail route came from small bands of Apaches native to the trans-Pecos area and southeastern New Mexico. Eventually, military forces headquartered at the post had to wrest control of the region from those bands and break their
power permanently in order to make the countryside safe for settlement and travel.

After a decrease in such raids for several years following Shafter's campaigns, Apaches stepped up their hit-and-run attacks on stagecoaches and wagon trains west of the Pecos in 1877. The attacks increased in both severity and frequency the next year as war parties threatened settlements as well as travellers.\textsuperscript{5}

The Apache chief, Victorio, proved to be the most difficult adversary for units at Fort Davis and nearby posts to overcome. Victorio belonged to the Warm Springs, or Ojo Caliente, band of Apaches. He united them with the Mescalero band in a war against both the United States and Mexico that combined small-scale fights with pursuits and patrols covering tremendous distances.

Vic\textsuperscript{t}orio and his followers left their New Mexico reservations several times in 1879, the final time in late summer. They vowed never to return and never to surrender. From that time on, they played a constant game of cat-and-mouse with American and Mexican troops sent to hunt them down. Appearing and disappearing at will, Victorio's band crossed the international boundary a number of times, making it next to impossible for the armies of either nation to pursue him effectively.\textsuperscript{6}

Strained relations between the two countries added to the difficulty and made concerted action against the common
enemy extremely difficult. Troops under Colonel Edward Hatch in New Mexico engaged in long, futile pursuits of Victorio's band as 1880 began. Then in May, a detachment of Indian scouts under Henry K. Parker found and attacked the Apaches on the Palomas River, driving them into Mexico.7

General E. O. C. Ord, commanding the Department of Texas, had placed Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson in command of the District of the Pecos, comprising the western part of the state, in 1878, when troubles with the Apaches were starting to increase. Grierson realized the futility of attempting to run small bands of Apaches to ground when those Indians possessed intimate knowledge of the countryside and military commanders did not. He determined to gain a thorough familiarity with the arid region in extreme West Texas, especially with its few, precious water sources. Once he had located them, through the diligent mapping efforts of every patrol he sent out in 1878 and 1879, he began to establish outposts at those water sources. With his troops in control of the only water in the region, Grierson could force the Apaches to fight on his terms.8

Grierson knew that Victorio would likely cross into Texas once Mexican troops came too close to his hiding place there, and the colonel wanted to be ready for him. After deploying his units to cover the most probable routes that the Apaches would take into the state, he rode with a small escort toward Eagle Springs, west of Fort Davis on the mail
route. On the way, he received despatches from patrols along the Rio Grande that Victorio had crossed the river and headed north. Grierson led his force of less than a dozen men to Tinaja de las Palmas, fifteen miles west of Eagle Springs and the only water source for a considerable distance to the north.9

Victorio and his band also made for Tinaja de las Palmas on their way north, but Grierson and his small escort managed to hold them off until reinforcements arrived and forced the Apaches to retire below the Rio Grande. Several days later, in early August, Grierson again beat Victorio to water, this time at Rattlesnake Springs in the Sierra Diablo. After a stiff fight for possession of the water hole, the Indians broke off the engagement and again crossed into Mexico.10 Although small bands of renegade Apaches continued to menace travellers and ranchmen in the Fort Davis region after that, Victorio never again did so. Two months after the fight at Rattlesnake Springs, Mexican troops surrounded and destroyed Victorio's force in the hills of northern Chihuahua.11

Grierson assumed command of Fort Davis after all Apache raiding in the region had virtually ceased, and remained at the fort for three years until 1885. At that time, he and the Tenth Cavalry transferred out of the state. The fort remained active, but largely unnecessary, until 1891.12
Throughout the period from 1866 to 1886, Fort Davis maintained a large number of outposts to aid in controlling and protecting its region. Those posts fell into one or both of two main categories. The first included picket stations at points along the mail route. Posts in the second category covered important water holes and served as scouting camps. Three posts—Fort Quitman, Camp Peña Colorado, and Fort Hancock—made up a third group related to Fort Davis, but they fit more properly into a separate category of minor independent forts and receive coverage in a later chapter. Yet another outpost, referred to as the Pinery, functioned as a sawmill and furnished lumber to Fort Davis for construction.

From east to west along the mail route to El Paso, Fort Davis garrisoned stage stations at Barilla (or Varilla) Springs, Barrel Springs, El Muerto, Van Horn’s Wells, and Eagle Springs. Fort Davis stood between Barilla Springs to the east and Barrel Springs to the west.

Some troopers liked duty at picket stations on the mail lines. It gave them a break from the routine of garrison duty at the fort. It had certain drawbacks, however, and a greater element of danger. The danger came from the fact that only a handful of troops usually stayed at a picket station, and from the constant presence of horses and mules in the station’s corral, tempting prizes for Indian raiders. In addition, civilian employees of the mail lines often
treated military guards badly, especially black soldiers who comprised Fort Davis's complement of troops during so much of its existence. Sometimes stage drivers refused to allow offgoing black station guards to ride coaches back to the main fort if white passengers were aboard.\textsuperscript{13}

Barilla Springs stage station consisted of a two-room building surrounded by a high adobe wall, with an adobe corral for animals.\textsuperscript{14} Troops stationed there to guard the mail line and ride escort on coaches lived in a building similar to the stage station. The quarters had adobe walls, a mud roof and floor, and no bunks or furniture. The soldiers cooked in the open fireplace. Few trees grew in the immediate vicinity, and the men had to cut and haul firewood from three miles away.\textsuperscript{15}

Shortly after the army reoccupied posts in southwestern Texas following the Civil War, Colonel Edward Hatch recommended a full company garrison for Barilla Springs and several other stations on the mail route.\textsuperscript{16} A shortage of troops, however, made a garrison of that size impossible, and the stations had to manage with a handful of soldiers. In mid-September 1868, the corporal in command at Barilla Springs reported a night attack by an undetermined number of Indians. Troops from Fort Stockton rode out in pursuit of the raiders, but it proved fruitless. Such attacks and such unsuccessful pursuits became commonplace at Barilla Springs
and the other picket stations on the mail route in southwestern Texas.¹⁷

Raids increased in 1871. In June of that year an estimated force of sixty Indians struck a military wagon train camped at Barilla Springs and ran off forty of their mules. Forts Davis and Stockton sent troops to follow the raiders.¹⁸ A few days after the attack, a combined force of eighty men under Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Shafter left Barilla Springs and pursued the Indians onto the Staked Plains. After a nine-day march, the troops caught and attacked a party of Apaches, capturing one and recovering sixteen animals.¹⁹

Indians continued to attack Barilla Springs throughout the 1870s, primarily for its animals. Sometimes they managed to make off with mules or horses, but at other times the garrison or civilian employees drove off the attackers and inflicted losses on them.²⁰

During the height of the Victorio campaign in mid-1880, a troublesome incident arose concerning one of the soldiers on guard at Barilla Springs. That man, Private George Taylor, rode as escort on many of the stages that passed from the station to other points on the mail line. He had the habit of cursing the drivers and almost came to blows with some. Despite orders from Fort Davis designed to keep soldiers from arguing with civilian employees of the stage line, Taylor persisted in his behavior. Finally, all of the
drivers on that stretch of the line refused to permit him to ride their coaches, preferring the greater risk of Indian attack to Taylor's personality.21

Barilla Springs and the other picket stations on the mail line retained their military guards as long as danger from the Apaches remained. By the mid-1880s, however, the need for military protection at each station had practically ceased to exist, except along the immediate Mexican border, and the army pulled its pickets back into Fort Davis and the other larger posts.

The mail route ran through Barilla Springs to Fort Davis and then through a station known as Barrel Springs. That station stood twenty-two miles southwest of the fort. It consisted of a forty by sixty-foot corral made of stone slabs stacked about eleven feet high, and two adobe rooms. The rooms stood on either side of the one gate to the corral and against its outside wall. That arrangement gave the station the appearance of a small fortress and provided a stout defensive position for the station keepers and any troops there, in case of attack. The spring itself lay in a ravine a quarter mile from the station and furnished a modest permanent source of water.22

The first troops to guard Barrel Springs, a detachment of twelve men of the Forty-first Infantry, transferred to the station from Fort Davis on June 30, 1868. In December of that year, Colonel Wesley Merritt at Fort Davis reduced
the garrison at Barrel Springs to seven enlisted men, a number he considered sufficient to protect the station itself, the animals having been withdrawn by the stage company to another location. Fresh troops from the fort relieved the detail on duty at the picket station approximately every two months.\textsuperscript{23}

Friction existed at times between the military and the stage employees they were attempting to protect at the mail station. During the army's first year at Barrel Springs, a stage driver there named John Clark aided a fugitive from justice. Colonel Merritt reported the incident to district headquarters, commenting on the lack of respect for government and military authority evident in so many of the ex-Confederate civilians in Texas.\textsuperscript{24}

Barrel Springs never faced a determined Indian attack, possibly because of its proximity to Fort Davis or the fact that it often had no horses or mules to attract a raiding party. Nevertheless, Apaches sometimes did threaten the area. In September 1877, F. C. Godfrey, agent at the Mescalero Agency at South Fork, New Mexico Territory, requested that Fort Davis send out patrols to Barrel Springs and other points to intercept groups of Mescaleros that had recently left the reservation to join other Apaches in raiding.\textsuperscript{25} In June 1880, during Victorio's last summer, men presumed to be Indians shot at the station keeper at Barrel Springs but did not make an actual attack on the
station. That incident marked the last action by hostile Indians at Barrel Springs.

The mail road swung northwest again past Barrel Springs and ran almost fourteen miles before it reached Dead Man's Hole station, more commonly referred to as El Muerto. The station there consisted of a stone corral, fifty-two by forty-four feet, and two adobe buildings on the outside wall. One of the buildings had loopholes in the wall it shared with the corral, allowing men inside to fire into the corral, apparently a measure designed to counter raids on the station's livestock. A spring provided water a half mile away.

On December 11, 1867, the first troops ordered to guard El Muerto, a twelve-man detachment of the Ninth Cavalry, rode to the station. Infantry replaced the cavalry there six months later. In September 1869, the commanding officer at Fort Davis sent a force over twice as large to El Muerto but found that the spring could not supply enough water for all of the animals and men. Therefore, he reduced the garrison to ten men.

Indians struck El Muerto on occasion. In the early summer of 1869, a band ran off the mail company's mules. A lull in Indian activity over the next few years caused the army to reduce the size of the detail at El Muerto and other stations on the line continually until, by the summer of 1877, only two soldiers guarded each picket station.
Additional troops rode escort on the stages, a practice some army leaders found completely unnecessary.31

After Apache raids increased in the late 1870s, Fort Davis doubled its guard details at El Muerto and other stations from two men to four. Soldiers still rode escort on the stages themselves.32 As with the other picket stations on the mail route, the army found it unnecessary to continue guarding El Muerto after Indian raids stopped in the early 1880s.

The mail route continued from El Muerto thirty-two miles to Van Horn’s Wells, located in the foot hills of the Van Horn Mountains. The mail company had constructed station buildings of adobe and stone, surrounded by a corral. Water came to the surface near the station and formed an oasis of permanent pools and willow trees.33

A small guard occupied Van Horn’s Wells. Through the late 1870s, they lived in tents rather than solid structures.34 When Apache raids picked up in numbers and intensity in 1877, coaches along the route near Van Horn’s Wells suffered as much as any. One stage driver, William Mitchell, lent a new tailor-made shirt to another driver. A few days later, travellers found the other driver dead, shot full of arrows while wearing Mitchell’s new shirt.35

Such attacks prompted the army to reinforce the detail at Van Horn’s Wells, but not to any large degree.36 Van
Horn’s Wells remained a small picket station of Fort Davis until danger from the Apaches in the region ended.

Eagle Springs, last of the mail route picket stations, lay twenty miles northwest of Van Horn’s Wells. The station itself stood in a narrow canyon in the Eagle Mountains. It had a huge corral, 115 feet long by 43 feet wide, with thick limestone slab walls. The springs seeped out of rock a quarter mile west of the station. Indians attacked Eagle Springs station more than any of the other spots on the mail route, probably because they could approach it unseen from one of several directions and, of course, because of the good supply of water available there.37

Realizing the danger, Colonel Edward Hatch sent F Company, Ninth Cavalry, under Captain Henry Carroll to Eagle Springs from Fort Davis in December 1867.38 A few weeks later Hatch inspected the area himself to determine the extent of the Indian problem around the station. After his inspection Hatch recommended that the District of Texas station a full company at Eagle Springs.39

By June 1868, I Company, Ninth Cavalry, under Captain Theodore Boice garrisoned Eagle Springs. Stretched across hundreds of miles of frontier, however, the regiment could not continue to keep that much of its strength at one picket station, regardless of its importance as a water source or its danger. Military authorities continually reduced the
garrison until only a sergeant and four privates remained by late 1871.\textsuperscript{40}

Eagle Springs and the other water holes in the region provided a fairly dependable supply of water for small detachments and stage animals, but the quantity often proved inadequate for larger bodies of troops moving through the area. Cavalry units usually had to travel in staggered groups one or more days apart in order to allow enough time for springs to fill up again after men and animals had drunk. Some officers suggested blasting out the springs to enlarge them and eliminate the problem, and at a few locations that was accomplished.\textsuperscript{41}

When Apache raids increased in 1878, the command at Fort Davis began sending larger detachments to Eagle Springs, not to guard the station, but to scout the surrounding country from that location. In effect, Eagle Springs shifted from picket station to subpost with the increase in garrison and change in responsibilities. In June of 1878, Captain L. H. Carpenter led a large force to Eagle Springs with orders to patrol the area, locate all water sources, find any Indian trails, and determine the availability of grass and timber with the object of establishing scouting camps at the best spots.\textsuperscript{42}

The additional troops placed a strain on the water supply at Eagle Springs. As early as the fall of 1878, units based there had to keep most of their men out on
patrol to avoid overtaxing the springs.\textsuperscript{43} By the summer of 1880, the situation had grown worse. For a time, Captain Carpenter had to move his command to another location in order to provide water for his animals.\textsuperscript{44}

Despite water shortages, troops from Eagle Springs had several successes against Indian raiders in the area during the late 1870s and early 1880s. In late July 1879, Captain M. L. Courtney with one company of the Twenty-fifth Infantry and a few men from the Tenth Cavalry left Eagle Springs in pursuit of a band of Apaches. Courtney's patrol stuck to the trail as it headed northeast toward New Mexico Territory. The troops finally caught up with the war party near Sulphur Springs, Texas, a short distance south of the New Mexico boundary, and engaged them. In the skirmish Courtney's men killed two Apaches and captured ten horses.\textsuperscript{45}

The most important fight involving troops at Eagle Springs occurred at Tinaja de las Palmas, between Eagle Springs and Fort Quitman, in late July 1880. Colonel Benjamin Grierson and a detail of ten men took up a position there when Grierson received a report that Victorio and his band were heading in that direction. Grierson realized that the Apaches needed water and that they would avoid Eagle Springs and other major water holes they knew to be garrisoned. He guessed they would strike for Tinaja de las Palmas, and he planned to prevent them from watering there
and to turn them back toward the Rio Grande. To do so, he called in reinforcements from both Eagle Springs and Fort Quitman. In a fight lasting several hours, his command denied Victorio the water he needed and forced him to retreat into Mexico. If the Apaches had managed to replenish their water and continue northward, the pursuit of Victorio almost certainly would have lasted much longer than it did and would have cost the lives of more Americans and Mexicans.\textsuperscript{46}

Troops continued to use Eagle Springs as a base for scouts of the surrounding area long after Mexican soldiers finally destroyed Victorio’s band in the fall of 1880. At the end of June 1882, however, the last troops pulled out of Eagle Springs and the picket station ceased to exist.\textsuperscript{47}

The town of Presidio, on the Rio Grande approximately one hundred miles southwest of Fort Davis, served as a subpost during the late 1870s and early 1880s. Problems from Mexican revolutionaries as well as Indians first prompted Americans in the town to request troops. Colonel George Andrews and a company from Fort Davis occupied Presidio briefly in the summer of 1872 during a revolutionary disturbance.\textsuperscript{48}

In September 1875, Thomas G. Williams, Special U. S. Indian Commissioner in the area, suggested that General E. O. C. Ord, commanding the Department of Texas, close Fort Davis and transfer its garrison to Presidio to better guard
the region against depredations by Mescalero Apaches.\textsuperscript{49} Two months later, J. W. Clarke, a United States customs official, asked for military protection at Presidio. Although two officers sent from Fort Davis to assess the situation recommended a force be stationed at Presidio, a shortage of troops and problems with American civilian officials prevented the command at Davis from taking action.\textsuperscript{50}

In December 1876, however, Mexican revolutionaries took an American citizen hostage, and a sizeable detachment of troops from Fort Davis under Colonel Andrews moved toward the town to effect his release. They hauled a field gun with them. When the detachment arrived at Presidio, Andrews fired two shells from the field gun into the Mexican town of Ojinaga across the river in an attempt to make the Mexicans release the captive American. That tactic did not work immediately, but a few days later the man made his way across the Rio Grande to safety.\textsuperscript{51}

The troops occupied a location known as Spencer’s Rancho at Presidio.\textsuperscript{52} In February 1877, five soldiers from the subpost and a number of civilian volunteers pursued a party of Indians who had run off livestock from a nearby ranch. The patrol followed the Indians’ trail forty miles to a point near Eagle Springs, but finally gave up the pursuit.\textsuperscript{53}
Troops continued to operate out of Presidio for the next few years, scouting the border region and pursuing Indians and Mexican outlaws. At times, several companies used the subpost as a base of operations. By 1883, a railroad from El Paso to Chihuahua had already taken most of the trade that previously passed through Presidio. In addition, lack of a clear government title to the subpost's land and unsatisfactory quarters for the soldiers there convinced the government to close it. The army abandoned the post at Presidio in 1883.

In the late spring of 1878, Colonel Grierson ordered Lieutenant Mason Maxon to establish a permanent scouting camp at Peña Blanca, at the head of San Francisco Creek. The camp stood many miles south of Fort Stockton in the Big Bend region, and actual authority over the camp alternated between Stockton and Davis. From Peña Blanca, patrols scouted the surrounding area during that entire summer for Indians, water sources, and wagon routes to link the posts and settlements of the region. Lieutenant Calvin Esterly of Maxon's command made a number of excellent maps of the water holes and other natural features found during the scouts.

Maxon lost no time in establishing a strict military routine for his new camp. He promulgated a daily schedule that had troops up before sunrise and feeding and grooming their animals before a six o'clock breakfast. He ordered a formal inspection of the entire command to be made weekly.
All men would bathe at least three times per week unless excused by the post surgeon.57

In August 1878, Maxon left Peña Blanca for Fort Stockton, but his troops remained.58 Early in October, an Indian raid from Mexico into Kerr County prompted Grierson’s headquarters to warn the command at Peña Blanca to watch for the war party.59 The garrison there saw little if any action against Indians, however, and road building remained their most important duty. The following year, a company of the Twenty-fifth Infantry occupied Peña Blanca and worked on the road between that point and the post at Peña Colorado, near the town of Marathon.60 After that time, army units no longer occupied Peña Blanca.

During Grierson’s tenure as commander of the District of the Pecos, Fort Davis maintained a subpost at Pine Spring, sometimes called Bull Spring. The spring lay at the summit of Guadalupe Pass in the range of that name and had served as a stage station for many years.61 Troops had used the spring as a rendezvous point and temporary camping place on some occasions in earlier years, such as when a sizeable detachment of the Ninth Cavalry from Fort Davis and Fort Stockton passed through on a scout in the Guadalupes in April 1870.62 Permanent use, however, only came during the Apache trouble in the late 1870s.

Elements of the Tenth Cavalry established the subpost at Pine Spring during the first eight months of 1878. From
that point, patrols scoured the surrounding country in all directions. The post stood in a strategic location to block Apache movement because of its position astride the standard route from Fort Stanton and southeastern New Mexico to the Rio Grande. Grierson ordered constant patrols out from Pine Spring to watch for Indian war parties over the next three years. A detachment from one such patrol, under Lieutenant R. E. Safford, Tenth Cavalry, pursued a small party of Indians near Wild Horse Tanks on April 12, 1879. The troops captured the Indians' horses, but the Apaches escaped on foot.

Lieutenant Safford died a short time later while he and his men were camping at Manzanita Springs on the eastern slope of the Guadalupes. On May 9, 1880, Lieutenant Mason Maxon established a semi-permanent scouting camp at the spot and named it Camp Safford in the young officer's memory. From that spot Maxon and his men engaged in several scouts, on one of which they rode all the way to El Paso and back.

Another subpost existed during the same period as Camp Safford at Seven Springs, which was on a branch of the east fork of Toyah Creek. The post stood about twenty miles north of Fort Davis. The seven springs, all within a one-mile circle, issued from the base of lava mountains north of the main road leading to Toyah. Each flowed above ground for a short distance, none for more than 200 yards,
before returning underground. The largest spring had the capability of supplying a company of cavalry if dug out and enlarged.69

Colonel Grierson placed an infantry company at Seven Springs in the early summer of 1878, to prevent Indians from using the springs, to keep them from passing through the surrounding area, and to protect the stage road from Barilla Springs to Limpia Canyon. The army was already using the point as a supply depot for passing cavalry units, and the foot soldiers served also to guard those supplies.70

In addition to the infantry, a small cavalry detachment occupied the subpost. Infantry patrols went out from the post regularly, and smaller daily scouting parties covered the vicinity of the camp out to a distance of fifteen miles. If any patrol came across Indian sign, one man would return to the camp and alert the cavalry detachment, which would start out on the trail immediately. The cavalrmen kept six days' rations packed and ready constantly for that purpose.71 Grierson kept units stationed at Seven Springs for most of the next two years, scouting and patrolling the roads in an effort to keep hostile Indians out of the area.72

From the mid-1870s through 1880, the army periodically stationed troops at Faver's Ranch, sometimes known as the scouting camp in the Chinati Mountains. The outpost stood about twenty-five miles north of Presidio.73
Faver's Ranch became a favorite target of Indian raiders after the Civil War. Attacks in 1866 and 1867 resulted in several ranchmen dead and hundreds of head of livestock stolen. Conditions did not improve with time. In March 1870, Indians killed another man and stole 400 head of sheep. Five years later they struck the ranch again, with similar results. The army responded by stationing a detachment of troops there.

During the hunt for Victorio, a significant force operated out of the camp, scouting the Chinati Mountains and keeping close watch on the fords of the Rio Grande. Troops of the Tenth Cavalry and the First Infantry occupied Faver's Ranch during that period. Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Shafter, commanding the newly formed District of the Bravo, made his headquarters there for a time.

Although the garrison at Faver's Ranch did not engage in a major action against Victorio or any other large party of hostile Indians during the period, they sometimes had to deal with small bands of raiders. In the spring of 1880, a handful of Apaches on foot hit a Mexican family near the Russell Ranch. They killed one boy, took another captive, and stole a horse. The Indians then fled the area, pursued by the boys' father and several other Mexicans. A unit of Seminole Negro scouts and a cavalry detachment joined in the chase, but the Apaches killed the horse and vanished on foot without leaving a trail over the rocky ground.
Briefly during the Victorio campaign of 1880, a detachment of troops held Viejo Pass, a gap in a series of mountain ranges paralleling the Rio Grande. The pass, ten miles west of the present town of Valentine and sixty miles west of Fort Davis, provided a natural avenue for the Apaches through the rugged country along the Mexican border. In addition, a permanent spring furnished water year round.  

In early June 1880, a small detail of Pueblo Indian scouts with a young army officer and a few troops camped in Viejo Pass on the way from El Paso to the Fort Davis area. Despite advice from the experienced Pueblos, the lieutenant insisted on camping in an exposed position surrounded by rocky heights. The next morning, a band of Apaches hidden in the rocks above opened fire on the camp, killing Simon Olgin, head of the scouts, and scattering the troops. The remaining scouts returned fire and eventually drove the Apaches away.  

Captain Louis Carpenter and his company of the Tenth Cavalry immediately rode to the site of the attack from their camp at Eagle Springs and took up the trail. Although they failed to catch the Apaches responsible for the raid, Carpenter's men occupied Viejo Pass, denying the Apaches further use of the pass and its water supply for the remainder of the campaign.
Viejo Pass continued to be one of the most strategic points in the region southwest of Fort Davis. Grierson kept elements of the Tenth Cavalry operating in the area well into 1883, long after any major Apache threat had disappeared. He recommended purchasing the site for use as a permanent post, but shortly after that recommendation, the army transferred him and his regiment to Arizona, and nothing came of his suggestion.\(^8\)

For a short time during the Victorio campaign, troops out of Fort Davis maintained a small picket station to watch the Rio Grande at Ojo Caliente, northwest of Viejo Pass and southwest of Van Horn’s Wells and the Eagle Mountains. The most costly engagement for Grierson’s soldiers in the entire campaign in Texas occurred there on October 28, 1880.\(^2\)

A small detachment of two noncommissioned officers and ten privates formed the picket at Ojo Caliente. Their company commander had detached the men on a scout down the river several days before the fight, and on October 27, the patrol established a camp at Ojo Caliente for surveillance of the Rio Grande crossing there. The next morning a band estimated at between a dozen and fifty Apaches who had earlier broken off from Victorio’s party struck the soldiers by surprise. The Indians killed four or five of the troops and captured their animals and much of their equipment. Although cavalry units closed on the spot from three directions, the Apaches vanished into Mexico. From that
time on, the army used Ojo Caliente only as a temporary
picket station to watch the ford of the Rio Grande on
certain occasions.83

Of all the outposts of Fort Davis, one had construction
rather than combat as its object, and that outpost was
referred to as the pinery. Actually, a number of pineries
existed during the fort's active years because the supply of
timber at one location could only last for a limited time.
Soon after companies of the Ninth Cavalry under Lieutenant
Colonel Wesley Merritt's command reoccupied Fort Davis, a
detail of troops from that regiment began sawmill operations
at a site closeby for new construction at the fort.84

Another pinery, established in October 1870, stood
approximately sixteen miles northwest of Fort Davis. Troops
from the Twenty-fifth Infantry garrisoned the site at that
time to help in the work and to provide protection from
Indian attack.85 The command at Fort Davis pulled out the
troops after a few months, but more than a dozen civilians
remained to continue work at the sawmill. Soon they
transferred the machinery to a new site, twenty-five miles
from the fort, where abundant timber stood. In early March
1871, Indians threatened the outpost, causing the civilians
there to request a detachment of troops or a supply of arms
with which to defend themselves.86

The pace of operations at the pineries depended upon
the amount of construction work at Fort Davis at the time.
In 1870 and 1871 new buildings went up at the fort, requiring a large amount of lumber. As a result, work at the pinery went forward rapidly. The types of lumber cut there for new construction included 2 X 4’s, 2 X 6’s, 2 X 8’s, 1 X 6’s for flooring, and shingles, plus other sizes. Teamsters hauled the cut lumber back to Fort Davis on mule-drawn wagons. Wagons required roads in the Davis Mountain region, and some troops spent a great deal of time building or repairing those roads that linked the pineries with the fort. Producing a roadway with a gentle enough grade for heavily laden lumber wagons proved difficult and extremely tiresome to soldiers on the work details. Some even refused to work on the roads. A detail of infantry under Lieutenant C. R. Ward, Tenth Cavalry, came to the point of mutiny over such a situation and had to be threatened with working under guard before they finally returned to the job.

A new round of construction at Fort Davis and the minor post of Peña Colorado south of the fort in the early 1880s caused the pineries to go into production again. In July 1881, Lieutenant Colonel Shafter sent a company of infantry with the steam sawmill from Fort Davis to an old pinery site thirty miles north in Limpia Canyon, where much timber was still standing. The troops worked feverishly and were
shipping thousands of board feet of lumber back to the fort by the end of September.\textsuperscript{90}

Lack of funds for repairs at Fort Davis kept the pinery in operation through early 1884, even in the absence of major new construction. The sawmill provided lumber necessary to keep up the fort when the command had no money to purchase wood from civilian contractors.\textsuperscript{91} By June, however, the pinery began to close down operations as the men cut the last standing timber in the vicinity. The garrison dismantled the mill's equipment and abandoned the pinery at the end of the month.\textsuperscript{92}

With such a huge, unsettled region to cover, the command at Fort Davis had to use outposts to extend its control and protection to areas exposed to Indian attack. The army's success in eventually pacifying the region came about in large measure from the work of troops at those widely scattered subposts and picket stations.

As previously discussed in regard to Fort Concho, Grierson and other officers made excellent use of outposts in their successful campaigns against Apache raiders from 1878 to 1880. By concentrating their forces at the few water sources, they effectively reduced that huge region to an area of manageable proportions. Apaches in the region had to have water, and to get it they had to confront the army.
Grierson's strategy succeeded partly because of the relatively small size of Apache war parties and the fact that many of the outposts were close enough to one another to provide mutual support in the event of a major attack. The few men Grierson stationed at each outpost could hold their own against a typical force of Indians at least until reinforcements arrived from nearby posts.

Other key elements, particularly the active cooperation of Mexican forces below the Rio Grande, played important roles in the army's success. But the use of outposts as the framework of a defensive network served as the cornerstone of the strategy that eventually forced Apache raiders out of far West Texas.
ENDNOTES


3. Ibid.


6. Ibid., 74, 88-90.


12. Robinson, Frontier Forts of Texas, 57.


15. W. J. Sanborn to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, April 30, 1871, *Fort Davis Selected Documents*, Record Group 98, National Archives (hereafter cited as FDSD) (Microfilm, Rolls NMRA 66-783 (7675) 8-9 and 65-855 (10427), at Fort Davis National Historic Site).

16. Edward Hatch to C. E. Morse, February 5, 1868, Headquarters Records of Fort Stockton, Record Group 393, National Archives (hereafter cited as HRFS) (Microfilm M-1189).

17. D. H. Cortelyon to Ira W. Trask, September 19, 1868, HRFS.

18. W. R. Shafter to James F. Wade, June 18, 1871, HRFS.

19. General Orders No. 17, Department of Texas, November 9, 1871, M. L. Crimmins Collection, Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin.

20. "Incidents Involving Hostile Indians Within the Influence of Fort Davis, Texas 1866–1891," Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; J. H. Taylor to Commanding Officer, Fort Stockton, telegram, June 11, 1877, HRFS.

21. J. F. Ukkerd to W. H. W. James, August 9, 1880, FDSD.


25. F. C. Godfrey to M. M. Blunt, September 29, 1877, HRFS.

26. B. Baker to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, June 22, 1880, FDSD.


29. William Bayard to Commanding Officer, Fifth Military District, September 28, 1869, "El Muerto," CF.

30. Ibid.

31. George L. Andrews to Commanding Officer, Department of Texas, July 21, 1877, "Station Guards," CF.

32. L. H. Carpenter to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, July 11, 1879; W. H. W. James to Post Master, Fort Davis, August 7, 1880, "Stagecoaching," CF.


34. George L. Andrews to Commanding Officer, Department of Texas, July 21, 1877, "Station Guards," CF.


36. Ibid.


38. Ninth Cavalry Regimental Returns, December 1867, Record Group 94, National Archives (Microfilm M744, Roll 87).

39. Edward Hatch to C. E. Morse, January 24 and February 5, 1868, HRFS.

40. Ninth Cavalry Regimental Returns, June 1868 and October 1871.

41. D. H. Porter to P. A. Ekin, May 20, 1871, FDSD.

42. Robert Smither to L. H. Carpenter, June 4, 1878, FDSD.

43. Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Pecos, to Commanding Officer, Fort Davis, telegram, October 2, 1878, FDSD.

44. L. Carpenter to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, June 27, 1880, FDSD.


47. Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, to Commanding Officer, Fort Quitman, June 20, 1882, FDSD.

48. George S. Andrews to Commanding Officer, Department of Texas, August 13, 1872, "Presidio," CF.

49. Thomas G. Williams to E. O. C. Ord, September 28, 1875, FDSD.

50. George S. Andrews to Adjutant General, United States Army, November 17, 1875, "Presidio Crisis," CF.


52. Ibid.

53. John French to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, February 11, 1877, FDSD.

54. Fort Davis Post Returns, March 1881-March 1882, Record Group 94, National Archives (Microfilm M617, Roll 298).


57. Orders, Camp Peña Blanca, June 4, 1878, Maxon Family Papers, Fort Davis National Historic Site.

58. Temple, "Grierson's Administration," 90.

59. Robert Smither to Commanding Officer, Fort Stockton, October 7, 1878, HRFS.


62. General Order No. 2, Headquarters, Subdistrict of the Presidio, March 30, 1870, HRFS.


64. Temple, "Grierson's Administration," 91.


69. M. L. Courtney to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, October 7, 1878, FDSD.

70. Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Pecos, to Commanding Officer, Fort Davis, June 14, 1878, FDSD.

71. M. L. Courtney to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, October 7, 1878, FDSD.


73. George S. Andrews to Adjutant General, United States Army, November 17, 1875, "Presidio Crisis," CF.

74. "Incidents Involving Hostile Indians," Archives of the Big Bend.

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77. Ibid., 138.


80. L. H. Carpenter to Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Pecos, June 13, 1880; L. Carpenter to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, June 27, 1880, FDSD; McChristian, "Grierson's Fight," 50.

81. B. H. Grierson to Adjutant General, Department of Texas, August 5, 1883, Clay Miller Collection, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University (Copy held by Fort Davis National Historic Site).

82. B. H. Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, telegram, October 29, 1880, FDSD.


84. Alberts, *Brandy Station*, 194.

85. Robert D. Read to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, June 20, 1880, Clay Miller Collection, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University (copy held by Fort Davis National Historic Site); Nankivell, *History of the Twenty-fifth Regiment*, 16.

86. Daniel Murphy to Commanding Officer, Fort Davis, March 7, 1871, FDSD.

87. Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, to R. G. Armstrong, August 8, 1881; Colonel, First Infantry, to Adjutant General, Department of Texas, September 5, 1881; W. R. Shafter to F. E. Pierce, September 23, 1881, "Pinery Notes," CF.

88. W. Lea to Adjutant, Fort Davis, February 24, 1871, FDSD.

89. Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, to Daniel F. Callinan, December 10, 1881; Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, to C. R. Ward, September 3, 1883, "Pinery Notes," CF.

90. W. R. Shafter to Adjutant General, Department of Texas, July 19, 1881, "Pinery Notes," CF; F. E. Pierce to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, September 30, 1881, FDSD.
91. Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, to Commanding Officer, Fort Davis, telegram, August 17, 1882, FDSD.

92. Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, to Commanding Officer, Fort Davis, April 23, 1884; W. H. Clapps to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, June 12 and June 17, 1884, FDSD.
CHAPTER 11

FORT QUITMAN, CAMP PEÑA COLORADO, AND FORT HANCOCK

Three minor independent forts in the rugged mountainous region south and west of Fort Davis figured prominently in the pacification of that portion of West Texas in the period from 1866 to 1886. Fort Quitman, Camp Peña Colorado, and Fort Hancock each functioned as subposts of Fort Davis during certain periods, but they attained their highest levels of importance as independent forts.

In the summer of 1858, the army built Fort Quitman as an independent post guarding the San Antonio-El Paso road at the point where that road first reached the Rio Grande from the east. The post overlooked the river at a location approximately 120 miles west of Fort Davis. Authorities named it after the late Governor John A. Quitman of Mississippi, a general of volunteers in the Mexican War.¹

Following the Civil War, troops returned to Fort Quitman only after an increase in hostile Indian activity endangered travellers along the San Antonio-El Paso road. On January 1, 1868, F Company, Ninth Cavalry, reactivated the deserted post. Two more companies soon joined the original garrison, bringing the total force to 280 men.²
In May and June elements of Quitman's garrison guarded Eagle Springs, thirty-seven miles east on the road to Fort Davis. For that brief period Eagle Springs functioned as a subpost of Fort Quitman, but afterward it came under the jurisdiction of Fort Davis.³

Troops at Fort Quitman engaged in numerous scouts of the surrounding countryside as summer continued. Indian raids on the mail route increased because of an abundance of good grass and water for the warriors' ponies, and the command at the fort responded by providing more escorts to travellers and mail carriers and sending out additional patrols.⁴

Officers at Quitman at the time faced two problems that had little to do with fighting Indians. First, a number of people on both sides of the border chose to press claims against the United States government for losses incurred before or during the war. Certain Mexican residents of San Lorenzo, a village across the river from the fort, demanded $100,000 for wood and grass supposedly taken from the village by United States troops in 1861.⁵ The garrison did a great deal of business with the citizens of San Lorenzo and other nearby towns in Mexico, buying fresh vegetables and frequenting saloons and brothels there, but the fort's officers looked on the damage claims as nothing but blatant attempts to swindle the United States government.⁶
Secondly, the buildings at Quitman had lost windows, doors, and even roofs during the years of disuse between 1861 and 1868. Constructed of adobe, some of them fell in on their occupants during heavy rains. Many soldiers had to live in tents because of the poor condition of barracks and officers’ quarters. As a result of the bad living conditions, a large percentage of the garrison suffered from illnesses such as dysentery, fever, and bronchitis. The army considered building new structures or overhauling old ones but never put those plans into action. The buildings at Fort Quitman did eventually become more habitable but only because the individual occupants made the repairs themselves.

Garrison life at Fort Quitman continued without any great variation or excitement through the early and middle 1870s. At times the post held considerable firepower in the form of two Gatling guns and a pair of three-inch field guns, but the command never had occasion to use them against Indians. Patrols went out frequently, often as far as the Guadalupe Mountains, and sometimes they found Apache war parties or camps. The skirmishes that resulted seldom caused more than one or two casualties on either side. The most exciting event of the fort’s career as an independent post involved nature rather than Indian fighting. On the night of February 9, 1873, an earthquake shook the fort for a few seconds, breaking windows and bottles but causing no
injuries. Fort Quitman's existence as an independent post came to an end when the Department of Texas deactivated it on January 5, 1877.\textsuperscript{8}

The army began using Fort Quitman again three years after its deactivation, although as a subpost of Fort Davis rather than an independent fort. Captain L. H. Carpenter visited the abandoned post in early 1880 to determine whether the army should reactivate it for use against Victorio's Apaches. The government decided against full restoration of Fort Quitman, but Colonel Benjamin Grierson, commanding the District of the Pecos, placed company-sized detachments there throughout the Victorio campaign.\textsuperscript{9}

The pace of operations at Quitman reached its maximum during July and August 1880. At the end of July, troops from Quitman helped Grierson and a small detachment at Tinaja de las Palmas, east of the subpost, turn Victorio's band back from water and force them to cross the Rio Grande.\textsuperscript{10} A few days later, conditions reached their most critical point around Fort Quitman. Apaches killed James J. Byrne, a Civil War major general and a railroad employee in 1880, during an attack on a stagecoach near the fort on August 9.\textsuperscript{11} Two days later the commanding officer at Quitman reported that Indians had the fort under virtual siege.\textsuperscript{12}

The crisis diminished over the next few days as Grierson's units again forced the Apaches into Mexico. With
Victorio’s defeat and death at the hands of Mexican troops in the fall of 1880, the major threat from hostile Indians in the region ended. A detachment remained at Quitman, but the troops spent most of their time guarding strategic points or providing escorts for parties working on the Texas and Pacific railroad. The command even maintained a small outpost of its own at Carrizo Pass during the summer of 1881. By the following summer, lack of a real Indian threat nearby caused military authorities to transfer the remaining troops at Quitman. On July 10, 1882, the last soldiers marched out of the post and started for Camp Rice, farther up the Rio Grande.  

Far to the east of old Fort Quitman, the army established the second minor independent post in the region at Peña Colorado, near present-day Marathon. Colonel Grierson ordered two companies to the site in late 1879, when troubles with Apaches in the region were increasing. The presence of a military force there denied water from Maravillas Creek and Rainbow Springs to Indians operating southeast of Fort Davis. Equally important, troops at Peña Colorado, or Rainbow Cliffs, began building a long section of a new military road linking San Antonio with El Paso. The new road provided a shorter, more direct route east and west, and Peña Colorado stood in the middle of one of its longest segments.
Located approximately fifty miles southeast of Fort Davis and sixty miles southwest of Fort Stockton, Camp Peña Colorado had good communications with both. It served as a subpost of Davis during much of the early part of its existence but attained independent status in mid-1884. The camp lay in a small valley ringed by hills, which protected it from surrounding desert.

Stone provided the first and most logical building material for the structures at the post. Troops quarried the stone from a small hill less than a mile from the camp and constructed small huts to serve as quarters. Lack of wood forced the soldiers to roof their huts with mud and grass, a poor material during the area's brief but dramatic rain storms. Over a long period, the command at Peña Colorado replaced their cruder dwellings with more substantial structures. Fort Davis supplied hinges, windows, and other materials for the construction. The pinery provided rafters, poles, and wooden slabs for roofing the stables at the camp. On one trip, five wagons from Peña Colorado hauled almost 300 slabs from the pinery for that purpose.

The layout of Camp Peña Colorado resembled that of the major forts on the frontier, except on a smaller scale. Two enlisted barracks stood on one of the long sides of a rectangle facing three small officers' quarters across the parade ground. Storage and utility buildings occupied the
short east side of the parade ground, and the post hospital stood on the west. The camp maintained a remote sentry post approximately one-half mile to the east. Troops dug a well at the springs to provide an abundant source of water for the post, and guardhouse prisoners had the task of hauling that water to camp every day in a water cart. Private contractors provided some firewood, but the government also maintained a mule-driven treadmill saw to cut cordwood.

Camp Peña Colorado began as an infantry post, its garrison well suited to the command's primary mission of road building. Cavalry units came there eventually, however, and the troopers engaged in scouting and the pursuit of hostile Indians just as units from every other post on the frontier did. No important actions took place between troops from the post and Apache war parties, but the garrison did contribute to the pacification of the region by its regular patrols.

Peña Colorado also helped pacify its portion of the trans-Pecos area by maintaining several outposts. Those included Collins Spring, Andrews Gap, Willow Springs, and Nevill's Spring.

In March 1880, F Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, occupied Collins Spring. In April they moved camp six miles to Andrews Gap and remained there on detached service until
the middle of May, at which time they permanently closed the outpost.\textsuperscript{22}

The command at Peña Colorado also maintained a scouting post at Nevill's Spring, deep in the Big Bend country. In response to the murder of a family named Petty by renegade Indians in the area in November 1884, the army established a scouting camp at Willow Springs, a spot destitute of water and wood despite its name.\textsuperscript{23} A detachment of Seminole Negro scouts and ten enlisted men of the Tenth Cavalry formed the first garrison of the camp.\textsuperscript{24} A few weeks later the garrison transferred the outpost to a better location at Nevill's Spring, where it remained for many years.\textsuperscript{25} Seminole Negro scouts continued to form the primary force operating out of Nevill's Spring during its entire existence, but those men travelled to their headquarters at Fort Clark periodically to be paid. In the absence of the scouts, details from Peña Colorado garrisoned Nevill's Spring and maintained surveillance of the area.\textsuperscript{26}

Camp Peña Colorado outlasted Fort Davis as an active military post. The army abandoned Davis in 1891, but Peña Colorado remained for two more years as the army's main post in the Davis Mountain-Big Bend area.\textsuperscript{27}

The third minor independent post in the region, Fort Hancock, stood on the Rio Grande fifteen miles upstream from old Fort Quitman.\textsuperscript{28} Originally known as Camp Rice, the
post received the name Fort Hancock on May 14, 1886, in
memory of Major General Winfield Scott Hancock.  
Camp Rice began as a camp on the Southern Pacific railroad approximately thirty-seven miles northwest of Sierra Blanca, Texas. An army scouting party sent out to locate a spot for a new post to replace Fort Quitman in late April 1882, selected a site near the railroad camp. Plentiful wood and water existed at the new location, and it provided an excellent vantage point from which troops could monitor the crossings of the Rio Grande in the area. In early July, Quitman’s garrison transferred to their new post. 
High water threatened the camp shortly after its establishment and forced the garrison to shift its location a short distance away to higher ground in August. The men had few comforts at the new fort. They lived in tents for the first few months, and only in November did the command take steps to procure lumber for temporary quarters. The weather had turned cold by that time, and the troops suffered considerable discomfort from the lack of adequate shelter. No one among the garrison had training in carpentry, so the command had to beg the services of a skilled carpenter along with the building materials. Improvements came very slowly. By the following September, the men still had canvas roofs over their quarters, and
those roofs had started to leak badly.\textsuperscript{34} Adequate living quarters at Camp Rice remained a problem for a long time.

Despite uncomfortable living conditions, the garrison at Camp Rice provided an active deterrent to Indian raiders and occasional groups of Mexican bandits operating in the region along the Rio Grande. Small patrols from the fort combed the area north of the river on a monthly basis during the first two years of the post's existence. By 1884, the garrison began to reduce its scouting activity because a large number of ranches had been established in the region, and the increased settlement had helped diminish the danger from raiders.\textsuperscript{35}

During that same year, Camp Rice became an independent post, no longer under the control of Fort Davis. Under its new name, Fort Hancock, it outlasted both Davis and Peña Colorado, remaining an active military post until 1895.\textsuperscript{36}

Fort Quitman, Camp Peña Colorado, and Fort Hancock provided military protection to the wild area along the Rio Grande in the trans-Pecos region. They performed much the same function as Fort Davis and Fort Stockton but in positions considerably closer to the border with Mexico. Primarily the posts served as bases for scouting and, as such, extended the army's presence into country too remote from those major forts to be covered as effectively by their patrols.
The three minor forts aided in the pacification of their section of the frontier as much by the outgrowths of their presence as by the actual military force they brought to bear against the Apaches. Those outgrowths included road building, in the case of Camp Peña Colorado, and protection of the railroad by Fort Hancock. All three posts, by their mere presence, encouraged settlement by growing numbers of ranchers. As the country became more populated, hostile Indians found it more difficult and dangerous to continue raiding in the trans-Pecos region. Thus, just as they had done elsewhere on the frontier, the dual forces of settlement and military power worked together to pacify far West Texas.
ENDNOTES


2. Ibid., 11.

3. Fort Quitman Post Returns, May-June 1868, Record Group 94, National Archives (Microfilm M-617, Roll 985).

4. Ibid., July 1868.


12. Commanding Officer, Fort Quitman, to Commanding Officer, Fort Davis, telegram, August 11, 1880, Fort Davis Selected Documents, Record Group 98, National Archives (hereafter cited as FDSD) (Microfilm, Rolls NMRA 66-783 (7675) 8-9 and 65-855 (10427) 1 at Fort Davis National Historic Site).

13. Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, to Lieutenant Whitall, February 8, 1881; Commanding Officer, Fort Davis, to Adjutant General, Department of Texas, April 27, 1881; Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, to S. Finley, July 24, 1881; Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, to Commanding Officer, Fort Davis, July 5, 1882, FDSD. Ruhlen, "Quitman," 113.

15. Camp Peña Colorado Post Returns, March 1880 and June 1884, Record Group 94, National Archives (Microfilm M-617, Roll 901).


17. Ibid., 22-25.

18. F. L. Carrington to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, September 19, 1881; W. H. Beck to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, September 30, November 18, and November 30, 1881, FDSD.


20. Travis Roberts, interview by Jim Cullen, July 26, 1986, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.


22. Ibid., March-May 1880.


24. Special Orders No. 1, Department of Texas, January 2, 1885, FDSD.

25. Peña Colorado Post Returns, April 1885.


27. Wedin, Magnificent Marathon Basin, 29.


29. "Fort Hancock (Camp Rice)," Card Files, Fort Davis National Historic Site (hereafter cited as CF).

30. Commanding Officer, Fort Davis, to Vincent, Adjutant General, Department of Texas, telegram, April 28, 1882, FDSD.

31. Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, to Commanding Officer, Fort Davis, July 5, 1882, FDSD.

32. "Fort Hancock (Camp Rice)," CF.
33. T. Lebo to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, November 3, 1882, FDSD.

34. T. A. Baldwin to Post Adjutant, Fort Davis, September 30, 1883, FDSD.

35. W. H. Smith to T. A. Baldwin, March 26, 1884; J. S. Jouett to T. A. Baldwin, April 26, 1884, FDSD.

36. "Fort Hancock (Camp Rice)," CF.
CHAPTER 12

THE OUTPOST AND MILITARY STRATEGY ON THE TEXAS FRONTIER

In the years immediately following the Civil War, the army faced a tremendous challenge on the Texas frontier. Military authorities had to do more than simply defeat an enemy in battle. They had to overcome major obstacles in mobility and communications, which included both logistical support and actual channels of communication, in order to bring that enemy to battle, and they had to learn a far different kind of warfare from what they had practiced during the Civil War.

Those considerations had a great bearing on the army's decisions concerning placement of its military posts, their size, and their number, with the overriding goal of using them to aid in the pacification of the frontier. An understanding of the significance of outposts during this period depends upon at least a brief examination of those other vital elements of the military picture, because outposts did not exist in a vacuum.

The Texas frontier encompassed a huge area with very few settled inhabitants and required a military force mobile enough to cover large distances and prevail over a fast-moving and elusive foe. To accomplish those objectives, the
army found cavalry units to be especially useful. Granted, infantry served well enough to garrison picket stations designed solely for point defense. But only mounted troops stood a chance of catching or intercepting Indian war parties. Maintaining an adequate number of serviceable horses proved difficult for some units at certain times.

For example, during late 1866 and early 1867, the garrison of Buffalo Springs, A and E companies of the Sixth Cavalry, had too few horses to mount all of their men.¹ A shortage of horses continued to plague some units as the decade drew to a close. Garrisons at Fort Richardson and Fort Griffin found it extremely difficult to keep even small parties properly mounted for escort duty and impossible to provide enough horses for a large detachment on a twenty-four-hour forced march. In some cases, cavalry units had twice as many men as horses, and less than one-third of those animals were serviceable.² Occasional epidemics reduced the number of serviceable animals even further.³

In addition to epidemics and lack of sufficient numbers, the performance of cavalry horses often failed to measure up to required campaigning standards. When forced to subsist primarily on grass during lengthy pursuits, government horses often gave out while the tough little ponies of their adversaries pulled away and carried their riders to safety.⁴ Even infantry units tended to
outdistance cavalry on long campaigns, once the mounts had begun to tire and grain ran short.  

Railroads provided another aspect of the mobility issue. The Texas and Pacific railroad reached Fort Worth by July 1876 then pushed rapidly westward toward El Paso. The Southern Pacific, building eastward from California over a route that sometimes trespassed on Texas and Pacific surveys, got to El Paso before the latter. The two lines joined at Sierra Blanca in mid-December 1881, and linked the state from east to west by rail.

Railroads promised rapid movement for troops and supplies over long distances, a provision seemingly tailor-made for conditions on the Texas frontier. President Ulysses S. Grant and General William T. Sherman both supported the construction of railroads for their military utility. Railroads had an even greater value than their tactical usefulness, in that they encouraged settlement. As an area filled up with farmers and ranchers, the numbers of buffalo decreased, and safe havens for Indian war parties became fewer and fewer.

Those advantages had less significance in the pacification of the Texas frontier, however, than they might have had. The railroads did not cross the state and begin to bring the tactical military benefits mentioned until 1881, a year after Victorio's rampage had ended. After that last major Indian threat, only sporadic raids by small
groups of renegades troubled the frontier. Essentially, the railroads came too late to Texas to provide the army a significant advantage in mobility or logistics in its struggle to pacify the frontier.

Logistics, or supply, had a close connection with mobility in other ways. Large columns of troops in the field required considerable quantities of food, ammunition, and forage if they were to operate effectively over periods longer than a few days. Supplying those columns became one of the major obstacles to successful pursuit and engagement of Indian raiders by the army.

Mule-drawn wagons carried large quantities of supplies but had very definite disadvantages in frontier fighting. Such wagons moved slowly and required fairly level ground. Soft sand or mud could slow a supply wagon train to a painful crawl. In the rugged terrain characteristic of the Texas frontier and frequented by hostile Indians, supply wagons simply could not keep up with the troops they were supposed to supply.8

Rather than wagons, army columns learned to depend upon pack mules to provide mobile supply trains. Packtrains could keep up with columns of cavalry or infantry over almost any kind of ground. Their disadvantage lay in the fact that they carried much less than a similar number of mules hitched to wagons. For a period in the mid-1870s the army experimented with a cross between the wagon and the
pack mule, a two-wheel cart pulled by a pair of mules. Such a vehicle could carry 1200 pounds, as compared with 500 pounds that could be packed on the backs of two mules. Carts never attained widespread use, however, and troops continued to rely on packtrains. Probably the best combination use of pack mules and wagons occurred in campaigns such as the Red River War, in which wagons hauled large quantities of food and forage to advanced supply camps where packtrains loaded and carried them to mobile columns in the field.

Another essential commodity, water, sometimes proved to be decisive in an action or an entire campaign. Its importance varied with the area. In regions such as the northwestern frontier zone, along the Red River and the edge of the Staked Plains, and the lower Rio Grande frontier zone, water played a much less crucial role because of its greater availability than it did in the arid region of the trans-Pecos. As discussed in earlier chapters, water often determined the location of military posts and even the sites of some military actions. Probably no fight would have occurred at Tinaja de las Palmas if that spot had not held the only water available for many miles. As the army learned the location of most water sources in the trans-Pecos, it gained the ability to use that information to force Indian bands to retire from the region or to fight on its terms.
Mobility and supply had a close association with methods of communication for the military on the Texas frontier. Good communications between posts allowed more rapid concentration against the enemy. In addition, certain channels of communication such as roads doubled as avenues of supply.

Long before the Civil War the army had realized the military importance of roads connecting the military posts on the Texas frontier with one another and with towns and settlements in the state. During the 1850s troops completed the skeleton of a basic road network in Central Texas and the trans-Pecos region.¹⁰

Federal troops renewed their road-building efforts after the Civil War. Two of the black regiments in Texas, the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry, did the lion's share of construction in much of the state. Often companies from those regiments remained in the field for months at a time linking one post with another or shortening an existing route.¹¹ Probably more than any other officer, Colonel Benjamin Grierson contributed to the building of military roads in West Texas during the post-war years. His comprehensive program of scouting, mapping, occupation of water sources, and road construction provided a true defensive framework for the region that ultimately allowed the army to wrest control from the Indians.³²
The other channel of military communications on the Texas frontier, the telegraph, allowed even greater coordination between various commands and a much faster response to developments in the campaign area than the system of roads did. Colonel J. J. Reynolds, commanding the Department of Texas, made repeated requests beginning in 1868 for the materials and manpower to build a military telegraph network linking the posts in the department.13

After several attempts at passing a bill for construction of a military telegraph network in Texas, Congress finally approved such a measure in June 1874. The army's Office of the Chief Signal Officer placed Lieutenant Adolphus W. Greely in charge of the project in April 1875, relieving Lieutenant Allyn Capron, who had already completed preliminary surveys for the network. Greely coordinated the work of parties of soldiers on various portions of the line throughout the state. Under his direction the line reached virtual completion by the following spring.14

It linked Denison, Texas, with Fort Richardson, Fort Griffin, Camp Colorado, Fort Concho, and Fort Stockton on one line. A branch from Fort Richardson made connections with Fort Sill, Indian Territory. A second major line connected Fort Concho with Fort McKavett, San Antonio, Fort Clark, Fort Duncan, and the forts on the lower Rio Grande.15 Troops extended the telegraph in the trans-Pecos region beyond Fort Stockton to Fort Davis and El Paso by
early 1879, and units throughout the state maintained the network in good repair. The telegraph proved its military worth during the Victorio campaign of 1880, when Colonel Grierson and other officers used it extensively to transmit and receive orders and information between the many commands involved in the operation.

In close connection with those elements of mobility, supply, and communications, the army had to incorporate a strategy involving the placement of its military posts. In addressing the latter issue, military leaders faced several questions, including the most effective size for posts, best utilization of the garrison at each post, and the fundamental role that those posts were to fulfill in the overall strategy for protecting and pacifying the frontier. Those officers had to consider the nature of the threat as well as the limitations on their own resources in making their decisions. Such considerations varied with time and with specific location.

Military authorities differed in their opinions about the best size for posts on the frontier, some advocating many small posts and others preferring a few large ones. Those favoring large posts argued that a greater percentage of a given force could be put in the field from one large post than from several smaller ones, which would require a larger total garrison force to be left behind. They also
spoke in favor of benefits to good order and discipline that came from having an entire regiment at a single fort.\textsuperscript{17}

The argument for more small posts had better logical support and stronger political backing from frontier settlers. With Indian raiding parties able to strike any of virtually thousands of locations in the state, troops had to be spread out to cover the largest amount of territory and to reassure the citizens beyond the edge of civilization. The capability for rapid movement of troops by rail did not alter that situation until significant Indian danger in Texas had already passed. Also, because Indians usually travelled in relatively small numbers, garrisons did not have to be large to engage those bands successfully. In addition to purely military reasons, portions of the local economy in the vicinity of every post relied upon the military market for sale of their produce, and local citizens opposed every attempt to disestablish an army post.\textsuperscript{18}

Unfortunately for the military and settlers, the size of the army remained too small to establish or man a completely effective network of smaller posts.\textsuperscript{19} Major forts in Texas during the period from 1868 to 1886 usually had garrisons ranging from two to five companies, or from approximately 100 to 300 men. One company normally manned a regular subpost, and a detachment of two to fifteen men held a picket station in most cases. Considering the vast land
area along the Texas frontier, effective patrols from major forts and subposts could cover only a tiny fraction of the routes open to war parties. Thus, the lack of troops proved a much more serious handicap to the army's finding the enemy than to its ability to defeat them, once found.

As time went on during the period, military authorities tried to refine and improve tactics and doctrine for their units on patrol on the Texas frontier. In 1871, Colonel J. J. Reynolds, commanding the Department of Texas, kept half the strength of each major fort on patrols and scouts in the field. In his opinion such a policy extended "the greatest protection possible to the frontier counties with the force at hand." The following year, the new department commander, Brigadier General C. C. Augur, decided to issue revised standing orders for scouts and subposts in the state. Fearing that the pursuit of hostile bands had become mere routine offering little hope of success, he instituted a more vigorous policy demanding relentless action to follow, engage, and punish Indians marauding in the state. He also gave commanders of major posts authority to establish subposts and picket stations where they thought best. Still, those efforts proved to be of limited value because of the scarcity of troops and the existence of sanctuaries and refuges for raiders beyond the borders of Texas.
That same year the commanding officer of Fort Richardson proposed a comprehensive network of subposts and signal stations running from Fort Sill to San Antonio, a kind of Great Wall of China on the Texas frontier. The line would consist of a series of subposts approximately twenty-five miles apart, each holding a half company of infantry for garrison purposes and a half company of cavalry for scouting and pursuit. Between every two subposts, signal stations would stand at intervals of ten to twelve miles. From three to ten men would garrison each signal station. The stations and subposts would occupy high ground in order to keep all the land between posts and stations under observation. If a war party attempted to pass the line and enter the settlements, troops would spot it, flash the word to the other posts up and down the line, and launch a coordinated pursuit. Because of the tendency of Indians to raid in small parties, the cavalry companies at each subpost could almost certainly outmatch any raiders they found.22

The plan offered concrete benefits to the settlements in the northern and central parts of the state but said nothing about the extreme west or the Rio Grande frontier. Military authorities never accepted the proposal, possibly because it involved too much construction and expense, or possibly because such an effort had never been undertaken before.
A series of military offensives culminating in the Red River War of 1874-75 broke the power of the Comanches and Kiowas who had menaced the northern and western frontiers of the state for so long. Similar but more limited cross-border excursions by the army neutralized the threat from Kickapoos and related tribes in Mexico during the mid-1870s. Those army victories left only the Apaches in extreme West Texas posing appreciable danger to frontier settlements by the latter part of the decade.

Against that tribe in 1879-80, the army's system of subposts and picket stations proved most effective. Kept from water by garrisons at virtually every spring, and deprived of sanctuary south of the Rio Grande by the cooperation of the Mexican and United States governments, Victorio's band and others found themselves without the mobility and room to maneuver that had so long been their primary advantages. Finally able to force battle on their own terms, the United States and Mexican armies brought superior force to bear and destroyed those Apaches who chose to continue the fight.

In analyzing the role and importance of military outposts in the pacification of the Texas frontier between 1866 and 1886, two questions stand out: Did those outposts accomplish the objectives for which they were established? And, if they did, what conditions proved necessary to their success?
In answer to the first question, the use of outposts proved successful in certain instances and unsuccessful in others. Little evidence exists that subposts in the frontier zone along the Red River succeeded in preventing Indian depredations in North and Northwest Texas. The tribes responsible for raids in that region did not stop their hostile activities until the army crushed their power in offensive campaigns against the tribes' strongholds on the Staked Plains. The story appears similar along the lower Rio Grande frontier zone, with the difference that the army took no major offensive action against Mexican outlaws and cattle thieves there. Almost certainly if such outposts had not existed, depredations would have been greater, but the presence of those posts did not stop depredations or reduce them to an insignificant level.

In regard to picket posts responsible for merely protecting stage stations from Indian attack, the presence of troops did seem to reduce the likelihood of such attacks significantly and to contribute to the defeat of those attacks that did occur. Such picket stations played only a minor role in the overall struggle on the frontier.

Although outposts failed to accomplish their objectives in some areas of the frontier, their establishment and use proved quite effective in the region west of Fort Concho and throughout the trans-Pecos area in the late 1870s and early 1880s. As discussed previously, the army's system of
subposts played a key role in bringing Victorio and other Apaches to bay and in depriving them of their earlier advantages in mobility and initiative. Without the series of subposts controlling critical points, various bands might have continued to elude military forces for years longer.

In answer to the second question, several conditions proved necessary to the success of subposts in the latter campaigns. First, Colonel Benjamin Grierson and other officers formed a comprehensive plan for a system of outposts rather than establishing individual posts in response to individual needs. Grierson coupled his plan with extensive reconnaissance and mapping of the region, giving him as thorough a knowledge of its resources and terrain as the Indians had. With that knowledge, he placed his outposts in key locations that enabled him to control the region.

A second condition that proved important to the success of the outposts concerned the availability of water. Indians required water just as troops did, and only a few sources existed in that dry area. When Grierson established his outposts at every water hole and spring, he robbed the Apaches of their mobility. They had no choice but to remain in areas where they could obtain water, if the army occupied every other source.

A third condition aided the success of the army's use of outposts against the Apaches, the absence of a sanctuary
in Mexico. With Mexican troops cooperating against the common enemy, American units no longer faced the frustration of a safe zone for the Apache. That fact combined with the natural scarcity of water to reduce the Apaches' freedom of movement, in effect to reduce the vast area of the campaign from an infinitely large expanse to a finite series of points that the army could effectively control and deny to the enemy.

Space and mobility, the allies of Victorio and his brethren, were lost to the Indians because of the judicious use of subposts by the army under favorable conditions. In other circumstances such outposts proved much less effective. Regardless of their success or failure, however, the subposts, minor forts, and picket stations held a significant, if not often prominent, position in the pacification of the Texas frontier.

Few signs of the outposts remain today. Some of the more prominent ones, such as Grierson's Spring, have historical markers standing near the ruins of their buildings. The material used in construction often determines whether any ruins even exist. Stone walls and foundations last, but those of wood and adobe have disappeared over time. Of course, by their very nature outposts were designed for a temporary existence. Human beings made use of them for a few months or a few years then moved on.
It is only in connection with those people who lived, worked, and fought there that the outposts still have any significance. The heritage and the sacrifices of those men deserve recognition. For two decades following the Civil War they were there in the most remote reaches of the Texas frontier, standing in the gap.
1. B. Hutchins to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, May 18, 1867, Records of Fort Richardson, Texas, Record Group 393, National Archives (hereafter cited as RFRT) (Microfilm in possession of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department).

2. R. M. Morris to Louis Caziare, February 14, 1869; James Oakes to C. E. Morse, May 15, 1869, RFRT.

3. W. H. Wood to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, January 2, 1873, and January 12, 1873, RFRT.


5. Don Rickey, Jr., Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 244-45.


15. Ibid., Map following page 76; House, Report of the Secretary of War, 44th Cong., 2d sess., 1876, H. Exec. Doc. 1, pt. 2, Map 49 (Copy in "United States Military Telegraph Records," box 3H137, Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin).


19. Ibid.


22. Commanding Officer, Fort Richardson, to Adjutant General, United States Army, June 29, 1872, RFRT.
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