Officers Quarters Update

Due to the remodeling and construction of the Nimitz site, TPWD will not be bringing the furnishings and displays to the Captains Row buildings for several months.

The earliest these displays will be installed will be late June or later. There is a possibility there will be no installation until next year.

This is a shame visitors will not be able to see these displays.

We will keep you informed as we find out more information.

A Couple of Announcements

First of all...Memorial Day Weekend, May 24-26th, we are looking for volunteers to assist with tours of the site and work in the Post Library inventorying the collection. If you can help, contact John Cobb at: cobbfarm@ev1.net
Or contact Gabe at the Post as soon as possible.

The second thing is we need donations to help with postage for the newsletter. We now are sending out over 200 copies per month. This has eaten our budget and if you can help, sent a check to Friends of Fort McKavett marked for newsletter in care of Gabe.

Fort McKavett State Historic Site
From the Archives

A couple of interesting things came up in a copy of the 1870 Census of Menard County, Texas. The first thing is the mention of 27 year old Harry Martin, Hospital Steward 2nd Class, and his wife 18 year old Mary Martin, the Hospital Matron at Fort McKavett. This is the first time we have found any mention in any kind of documentation of a Hospital Matron or Nurse. Although, in the Medical Journals microfilm from Fort Griffin and Fort Richardson, we find the Matrons recorded for both Posts, not at Fort McKavett.

The second thing of interest is Dr. Redford Sharpe, 33 years old and his wife, Florida, age 20 years old are listed. This right after Mackenzie had left the Post to take over the 4th Cavalry. Dr. Sharpe died three years later in March of 1873 while serving in San Antonio. He knew Florida from this posting and after he earned his General’s Star in 1883 and was over the Department of Texas in San Antonio, he became engaged to the 33 year old widow before becoming incapacitated and medically retired from the Army. When Mackenzie died, she inherited several thousand dollars from his estate.

She never remarried and was buried with Dr. Sharpe in 1943 after she died at the age of 93 in the San Antonio National Cemetery. Her only son, Redford Sharpe Junior, a United States Attorney died in 1904 and is buried with his parents.

First Chaplin of the 24th Infantry

John N. Schultz, Chaplain to the 24th Infantry Regiment at Fort McKavett from November 24, 1869 until Headquarters transferred to Fort Brown August 15, 1872.

John N. Schultz from Indiana was appointed as an Army Chaplain (paid as a Captain of infantry) with the 38th U.S. Infantry by President Johnson in July of 1866. He was with the Headquarters of the Regiment at Jefferson Barracks, Mo., from December 1866 to June 1867. He served at Fort Harker and Fort Zarah during the prevalence of the cholera epidemic where he assisted the Medical Officers in tending to the sick.

He transferred with the Headquarters of the 38th to Fort Craig, New Mexico in September 1867. On November 11, 1869, Chaplin Schultz was transferred to the newly formed 24th Infantry at Fort McKavett, Texas where he became the first Chaplin in the regiment’s history.

In the 1870 U.S. Census of Menard County, Texas he was listed as the Army Chaplin at the Post, 51 years of age and considered New Jersey as his home. He resigned and returned home on July 23, 1875.

Some notes on the Army Chaplin from the “History of the U.S. Army Chaplains Corps” show that the Chaplains wore a variation of the plain black clothing favored by clergymen of the period, with only the addition of a shepherds crook of frosted silver on a shoulder strap of black velvet. This remained their uniform until 1884, the year after Fort McKavett had closed, when Circular No. 1 prescribed that chaplains should wear the uniform called “undress for officers” but should not wear the full dress uniform of staff officers.

Chaplains were met with a mixture of contempt and admiration by their fellow officers. Some felt other than religious duties and taking collections, they were useless. Others saw their value for working with the education of the garrison, aiding the sick, performing marriages and burials, acting as Post Librarian, Post Gardener, Commissary and Bakery Manager, and sometimes Post Treasurer and Defense Counsel on Court Marshals.
The Last Soldier to Die on Duty at Fort McKavett
From the Medical Journal, Fort McKavett, Texas November, 1882

Sergeant Leander Batchelder, Company “D”, 16th Infantry, with one man was sent in pursuit November 12, 1882 of two men who had escaped from the guard house the preceding night, having a mount of mules. At a town about 20 miles distant, they became intoxicated and when proceeding on their way back to the post November 13th, 1882 when Sergeant was thrown off or fell from his animal, one foot not being disengaged from the stirrup, he was dragged a distance of nearly half a mile before it was freed from it. He was taken back to the town where I met him with ambulance returning to the post with him November 14th, 1882. His whole body sustained numerous contusions and the entire surface of his back and both sides of trunk were completely denuded. There were no apparent symptoms of any injury internally. The immediate cause of death was non retention of requisite heat. A.L. Buffington, Asst. Surgeon

Sergeant Batchelder died four days after returning to the Post and was buried at the Fort McKavett cemetery. Sergeant Leander Batchelder was removed to the National Cemetery in San Antonio when the Post was abandoned in 1883. He is now located in Section E, Grave 879.

This goes to show how people did some pretty stupid things even back then…

Remembering all our Soldiers 1776-2003

Upcoming Events
May 2-4, Texas forts Trail, Fort Worth (Contact Buddy at the Site)
May 17-18, Texas State Railroad Living History Timeline
May 16-17, 2nd Annual Living History Days, Fort Chadbourne
May 24-26, Memorial Day Tours at the Post
July 4-5-6, Guided Tours and Living History at Fort McKavett
December 5-7, Christmas at Fort Concho
In 16th Infantry’s Corporal E. A. Bode’s memoirs of 1882, he talks about the soldier’s life at Fort McKavett.

“As to the military life at the fort, the joys and sorrows of the soldiers at a regimental headquarters, the guard duty was light. One hour’s drill two or three times a week kept our limbs from growing stiff. [This] besides a couple of spectacular displays of dress parades for the amusement of the women constituted our post duty. The privates, if they were not policing around the garrison or scrubbing the company kitchens, were marched to the river to work from morning to night with pick and shovel building dams for the post gardens, or else some other kind of slaving around the fort.”

Bode also mentioned the life of the Non-Commissioned Officers on Post.

He states, “The noncommissioned officers, on the other hand, had less work to perform, [being] only required to superintend. But their money was well-earned by drilling recruits, putting them through their first military instruction. The most disagreeable job was surely to have a dozen green shavetails (a new army mule) and instruct them in the different maneuvers. No one [can] imagine that there is such ignorant class of men alive on this earth until he puts a dozen or so through the different maneuvers and manual of arms”.

Part of the Crowd at the Easter Egg Hunt April 19th. Around 150 people attended and there were over 2,000 eggs found.