

Arkansas Post

NATIONAL MEMORIAL • ARKANSAS

For two centuries soldiers and settlers of four nations walked this land: France, Spain, the United States, and the Southern Confederacy.

Henri de Tonti raised France's royal standard near here in 1686. We know little about the fort built by De Tonti or the one built by Ens. Sieur de la Boulaye 36 years later, except that they were located near one of the large Quapaw Indian villages in the vicinity. But the site of the third fort, built by Lt. Chevalier de la Houssaye in 1752, is within the grounds of Arkansas Post National Memorial.

De la Houssaye's post served for 11 years as a fur-trading center, an outlet for trade goods, a church mission, a mustering area for France's Indian allies, and an intermediate station that "connected the Illinois country and the settlements near the mouth of the Mississippi."

Spain became possessor of the territory in 1763, a little known outcome of the French and Indian War. Sixteen years later the Spanish established a fortification, San Carlos III, at the De la Houssaye site. It protected a farming community that grew up around it. Although the military garrison was withdrawn about the turn of the century, more than 60 families remained in the area. Their lives went on uninterrupted when Spain returned the territory to France in 1800. Indeed, they saw little change until November 30, 1803, when the

Spanish flag was lowered for the last time and the tricolor of Republican France rose in its place. Twenty days later the Stars and Stripes replaced the French flag and Arkansas Post became an American village.

Under American rule the town thrived for eight decades. It became an important trading center, the starting point for the first overland road into the interior, and a river port of note. *The Arkansas Gazette*, still a flourishing newspaper, was first published at Arkansas Post in 1819. Here, also, sat the first Federal court between St. Louis and New Orleans, and here met the first Arkansas Territorial Legislature. The town also served as the Arkansas County seat.

During the Civil War, the Confederates built Fort Hindman at Arkansas Post to protect the Arkansas River, placing great faith in an armored battery plated with railroad iron. Union artillery fire shredded the battery, and the fort fell on January 10, 1863. After the war the river carried off the remains of Fort Hindman.

Toward the end of the 19th century the shrill whistle of the steam locomotive signaled the town's death. Railroads became the most important common carrier, robbing the rivers of their steamboat commerce, and Arkansas Post faded away. In 1912 even the Arkansas River deserted

the old townsite, cutting a new channel away from the former river port. With the completion of the Arkansas River project, the navigation pool from Dam 2 now surrounds the memorial and Arkansas Post again sleeps by the river that gave it birth.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Arkansas Post is on Ark. 169, 20 miles south of De Witt via Ark. 1 (the Great River Road) and about 20 miles northeast of Dumas via Ark. 54 and 1. The visitor center is open daily except Christmas. Exhibits and an audiovisual program help explain the history of the post. An auto trail around the small, attractive lake gives further insight into the historic events that took place here.

The Historic Walking Trail offers additional information about the area. The trail is approximately one-half mile long.

The memorial is also a wildlife sanctuary. Firearms are not permitted. An Arkansas license is required for fishing. Pets must be on a leash or otherwise restrained.

We ask that you use the trash containers and leave the area as clean as you found it.

Boat launching is not permitted from the memorial.

There is a picnic area with tables and grills. Fires are only permitted here. A centrally located comfort station is also available.

Arkansas Post has no camping or eating facilities. There is no scheduled transportation from either De Witt or Dumas to the memorial.

ADMINISTRATION

Arkansas Post National Memorial is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Gillett, AR 72055, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States — now and in the future.

TO GILLETT & STUTTGART

169

TO STATE HWY 169 & SCULL CEMETERY

VISITOR CENTER

PICNIC AREA

COMFORT STATION

ARKANSAS POST NATIONAL MEMORIAL



0 400 800 1200
Scale in Feet

Approximate location of Fort Hindman

PARK LAKE

HISTORIC AREA

GREAT CROSS EXHIBIT

HISTORIC TRAIL

ARKANSAS

RIVER

ARKANSAS POST CANAL

NEW 1972

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