A SPECIAL PLACE, A SACRED TRUST:
PRESERVING THE FORT DAVIS STORY

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY
FORT DAVIS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

by
Michael Welsh

Intermountain Cultural Resource Center
Professional Paper No. 58
As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, parks and recreation areas, and to ensure the wise use of all these resources. The Department also has major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for the people who live in island territories under U. S. administration.
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Santa Fe, New Mexico
1996
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents ........................................ iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations ....................................... v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements ........................................... vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreward .................................................. ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One - <em>Fort Davis and the Western Story</em> ........ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two - <em>Closing a Fort, Preserving a Memory: Private Power and Public Initiative in Fort Davis, 1890-1941</em> .... 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three - <em>The New West Meets the Old: Creating Fort Davis National Historic Site, 1941-1961</em> .................. 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five - <em>Encounters with the Ghosts of Old Fort Davis: Interpretation &amp; Resource Management, 1966-1980.</em> .... 147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six - <em>Fort Davis and The Living History Initiative 1966-1980</em> ............................................. 193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Seven - <em>Refining the Message, Defending the Resources: The Quest for Institutional Support, 1980-1996</em> .... 205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography ................................................. 265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index .......................................................... 269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Historic Photograph Looking South with Chapel (c.1886)</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fort Davis Site Map</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Visitation Data for Fort Davis NHS (1963-1995)</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fort D.A. Russell Field Maneuvers (c.1922)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Visitor at Sleeping Lion Overlook (1890s)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jack Hoxie and Friends at Fort Davis Movie Set (1930)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Abandoned Fort Davis Looking North from Sleeping Lion Mountain (early 1900s)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hospital Steward's Quarters in Ruins (1950s)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ruins of Officers' Row (1950s)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fort Davis Historical Society Centennial Parade (1954)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>HB 1-2-3 Used as Guest Cottages (1940s)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ruins of Officers' Row with Old Sutler's Store (1950s)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Fort Davis Historical Society Museum (1953)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Officers' Row (early 1950s)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ruins of Chapel with HB 15 (1953)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ruins of Officers' Row (early 1950s)</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Michael Becker and Barry Scobee (1963)</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>HB 2 (Ranger's Office) with Storm Damage (1963)</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Front View of HB 2 (1963)</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>First Staff Portrait (Bob Dunnagan, et al.) (1963)</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Michael Becker at HB 30 (Guardhouse) Restoration (1964)</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Commissary Restoration (1960s)</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Ruins of HB 21 (Enlisted Men's Barracks) (1964)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>HB 9 (Officers' Quarters) (1964)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Scaffolding for Masonry Work on HB 46 (1966)</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Military Cemetery (1966)</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Construction of Employee Housing Compound (1965)</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Repointing Stone on Chapel Foundation (1967)</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Chapel Stabilization Work (1968)</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Wall Collapsing at HB 27 (Hospital) (1967)</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Demolition of Private Museum (1966)</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Two-Story Officers' Quarters across Parade Ground (1960s)</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Restoration of Freight Wagon Wheel (1960s)</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Excavation of Cistern Behind HB 7 (COQ) (1960s)</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Construction of Parking Lot (1965)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Completed Parking Lot (1966)</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Crowd in Attendance at Dedication Ceremony (1966)</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Lady Bird Johnson at Dedication Ceremony (1966)</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Richard Razo and other Cooperative Education Students (1971)</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 40. Frank Smith and Pablo Bencomo (1968) .................................................. 150
Figure 41. Derek Hambly (1970s) .............................................................................. 159
Figure 42. Superintendent Doug McChristian ................................................................. 206
Figure 43. Restored Enlisted Men's Barracks (late 1980s) ............................................... 215
Figure 44. Interior of Restored Enlisted Men's Barracks (1980) ..................................... 216
Figure 45. Park Technician William "Bill" Gwaltney (1980s) ............................................ 220
Figure 46. Pablo Bencomo Retirement Ceremony (1984) ............................................... 224
Figure 47. Steve Miller at 25th Anniversary Dedication (1986) ..................................... 234
Figure 48. 1880s Baseball Uniforms (1988) ................................................................. 237
Figure 49. Mary Williams and Kevin Cheri (1989) ......................................................... 241
Figure 50. Group Photograph for Garrison Gold Award (1988) .................................... 242
Figure 51. White House Ceremony for Take Pride in America Award (1989) ............... 244
Figure 52. Telephone Pioneers Installing Decking at Barracks (1994) ......................... 258
Figure 53. Pioneers Laying Walkway Structure (1994) ................................................ 259
Acknowledgements

Like so many people who have visited and worked at Fort Davis National Historic Site, I too came to realize the park's special qualities of environment and history. I also recognized the care and attention paid to the natural and cultural resources of Fort Davis by all who have been fortunate to work there. Thus it is no surprise that the staff and management of Fort Davis gave generously of their time and expertise. Thanks are especially in order for Jerry Yarbrough, superintendent at the park who decided that Fort Davis should have an administrative history prepared. His love of west Texas, and his commitment to public service, guided the research and writing of this manuscript at every turn. In like manner, longtime staff members Mary Williams (park ranger), Susanna Liddell (administrative assistant), and Paula Bates (administrative officer), were most helpful, as were supervisory ranger Allan Morris, museum curator Elaine Harmon, and Rito Rivera.

Previous staff members who gave of their time for interviews included Kevin Cheri, Doug McChristian, Bill Gwaltney, Frank Smith, Michael Becker, John Sutton, Dale Scheier, Pablo Bencomo, John Mitchell, Ralph Russell, and Erwin Thompson. Without the commitment and energy of Robert Utley, Fort Davis might not have become a park, and thanks are in order for his delightful and candid interview. The Friends of Fort Davis were most helpful, especially Pansy Espy and Malcolm "Bish" Tweedy. Other community members supportive of the work were Gene Hendryx and Clay Miller. Regional office staff who assisted immeasurably were Doug Faris, Art Gomez, Joanne Ortiz, and Stella Moya. Special thanks go to Neil Mangum, Trans-Pecos historian for the National Park Service, whose idea it was to revive the dormant administrative history that had been attempted twice before. His knowledge of the park service's historical needs, and his love of Fort Davis, made the project all the easier to conduct. It would not be right to ignore the fine accommodations offered in the town of Fort Davis by the staff of the Hotel Limpia, whose own history is closely linked to that of the fort and the national historic site.

Anyone who undertakes historical research of this nature must remember the contributions of family members, especially when time is limited and distance is far. My daughter Jacquie admired the park the first time she saw it, and in so doing followed in the footsteps of her mother, Cindy, whose family has deep roots in far west Texas as well as property in the Davis Mountains. Cindy's stories of the beauty and grandeur of the region (not to mention the cool summer weather) allowed me to appreciate the subtle attractions of the area, and to make sure that the story of Fort Davis reflects the impressions of visitors as well as public officials. Her help with the preparation of the manuscript, in light of the birth of our son Edward during its writing, also is apparent in the text and production. Fort Davis means as much to families as it does to scholars, and ours will remember its special character for years to come.

Michael Welsh
Greeley, Colorado
May 1996
Foreword

Over the past few years, attempts in producing an Administrative History for Fort Davis National Historic Site were inconclusive. That changed when I met Dr. Michael Welsh while in attendance at the 60th anniversary observance in August 1993 of White Sands National Monument. At the time, Dr. Welsh was finishing a similar volume for White Sands, and delivered the keynote address at the 60th anniversary ceremonies. Dr. Welsh impressed me with his grasp of the White Sands history, and I decided that he was the person needed to pull together the story of Fort Davis. Fortunately for Fort Davis, we were able to award him a contract to prepare the park’s administrative history that follows.

The park’s purpose in conducting this study was to tell the origins and development of Fort Davis National Historic Site from the time of its abandonment by the U.S. Army in 1891 until the present time. This study helps explain the reasons driving management decisions affecting the park under National Park Service (NPS) administration. It also places Fort Davis within the larger context of the community of Fort Davis, the Trans-Pecos region of West Texas, and relates the park to larger social, economic, and political issues of the United States.

In this study, Dr. Welsh captured the flavor of everything we wanted and desired as he moved through the chapters of time. The frank, personal interviews with those involved in the establishment, restoration, and preservation of the historic resources of Fort Davis have created a picture and dimension of the park that has not been seen in print. The extra research trips to Washington, DC, Fort Worth, Texas, and Denver, Colorado (not including the numerous visits to the park itself), allowed Michael to identify the story that made Fort Davis so special.

While Dr. Welsh had not visited this part of West Texas prior to initiating this contract, his wife’s family has deep roots in the Davis Mountains and Permian Basin. I feel that the stories told to him by his wife, Cynthia, about her childhood memories of the area inspired Michael to a higher level. And, as Michael soon discovered, Fort Davis is indeed a very special place. If he teaches with the same degree of enthusiasm as he conducts research, his students are fortunate to have someone so excited about history. Dr. Welsh’s study reflects his understanding of NPS operations and management goals, which must be balanced according to the fluctuating political mandates and regional values. In addition, his exhaustive research and synthesis of information gleaned from thousands of pages of reports and documents will help the park staff focus on present and future management decisions while providing an understanding of how the park became the place that it is.

On behalf of the park staff, I would like to extend our thanks to Dr. Welsh for his enthusiasm and desire to tell the Fort Davis National Historic Site story.

Jerry Yarbrough
Superintendent
January 1996
Figure 1. Historic Photograph Looking South with Chapel to the left of Flagstaff (c. 1886). Courtesy of Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 2: Fort Davis Site Map. Courtesy Fort Davis National Historic Site.
### VISITATION STATISTICS
FORT DAVIS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
1963-1995

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Beginning in 1986, Fort Davis changed its method of recording visitors to the park from a traffic counter to counting visitors in the visitor center.

**Figure 3.** Visitation Data for Fort Davis (1963-1995). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
CHAPTER ONE

Fort Davis and the Western Story

Standing on the parade ground of old Fort Davis, high in the Davis Mountains of far west Texas, one sees much more than the strikingly beautiful landscape of Limpia Canyon. Heralded in song and legend, the plains and mountains of west Texas (known as the Trans-Pecos region) have witnessed not only the unfolding of the saga of the American frontier. They also are home to the story of the American experience, from its precontact cultures down to the late-twentieth century. As the steward of Fort Davis National Historic Site, the National Park Service engages constantly in the discussion of the meaning of the far western frontier. In addition, its staff, volunteers, and Friends group must preserve a highly valuable architectural and historic resource to meet the needs of visitors seeking an accurate portrayal of what is often described as the "best example of the frontier military in the Southwest."

The competing forces of history and myth that suffuse the story of Fort Davis begin with the construction of the post itself, built in the heady days of the westward surge following the War with Mexico and the "rush" to the California gold fields. From the earliest encampment of American soldiers in 1854, to the re-establishment of the Army post after the Civil War (1867), to the abandonment of Fort Davis in 1891, the Davis Mountains hosted units of the Indian-fighting forces that would be enshrined in popular culture throughout the twentieth century. Yet few visitors come away from the site knowing the full impact of the ecological and human experience that marked life at Fort Davis, or of the actions taken by their public servants to guarantee to future generations access to the national treasure that the U.S. Congress in 1961 entrusted to the park service.

If one walked the 460-acre post with a history text in one's hand, one would recognize no less a spectacle than that offered by the beauty of the red cliffs and the green valley of the Limpia. Fort Davis included all the topics that have come in recent years to constitute the "new western" history: issues of race, class, gender, power, and environment. These concepts, studied for the first time in the revisionist era of the 1960s and 1970s, held that the "nation-building" story that for decades had explained the spread of American civilization across the continent had ignored or deemphasized problems caused by urbanization, modernization, and improvement of the American standard of living. For the past two decades and more the scholarly revision of the westward movement crafted a tale that would challenge prevailing assumptions of the western military and subsequent settlement. Yet the real life of the fort, as chronicled so well by park service historian Robert M. Utley, and later Robert Wooster, would one day emerge from the mists of the past to broaden the Fort Davis story. It would also provide the park service with one of its first opportunities at the end of the twentieth century to
fashion a narrative of achievement and conflict that the actual inhabitants of the fort, town, and mountainous region might recognize, were they to return to the post today.¹

Historians of the arid West have noted the extremes of environment that differentiate the Davis Mountains region from the source of most of the westward movement's population: the humid climate of the eastern United States. At almost 5,000 feet in altitude, Fort Davis shares an ecology more akin to its western neighbors of New Mexico and Arizona, and its southern neighbor of Mexico, than it does the state in which it resides. Where east Texas boasts abundant rainfall (the city of Dallas has nearly as much annual moisture as "rainy" Seattle, Washington), which permits agriculture and urbanization on a large scale, the Davis Mountains receive only enough rain in good years to support cattle ranching and small-scale irrigated farming. Distance, isolation, aridity, and altitude have influenced all cultures that have crossed the Trans-Pecos, from the earliest precontact societies of 9000 BC to the contemporary tourists and urban expatriates who flock to Fort Davis for its cool summers and mild winters. Limpia Creek, which in Spanish means "clear," cuts through the mountains on its journey to the Pecos River basin below on lands that Spanish explorers crossed in search of gold and ancient civilizations.

Native cultures found in the Davis Mountains what still endures today: game, wood, water, and temperate weather. Migration from the settled communities to the northwest (the New Mexican village-dwellers whom the Spanish generically referred to as the "Pueblos") had reached the Trans-Pecos about a century before Coronado, but left no permanent mark on the region. More prominent were the nomadic peoples known as the "Jumanos," whom the first Spanish observed traveling through the mountain corridors on their journeys into modern-day Mexico. By 1900, the Jumanos had been assimilated into Mexican society. The Spanish also found bands of people whom they called "Apaches." Because of their ability to survive and prosper over a vast stretch of desert, canyon, and mountain terrain, the Spanish called the area "El Gran Apacheria," reaching from Austin on the east to Tucson on the west, and from Wichita on the north to Chihuahua on the south.

Of these bands, whose own names for themselves translated to "human beings" or more simply "the people," the Spanish recognized one group as frequently visiting the area most often; the Mescalero Apache. Named for the mescal or "agave" plant whose buds gave them energy to survive in the desert, the Mescaleros considered as their homelands an area from southern New Mexico (modern-day Ruidoso in the Sierra Blanca) to the Pecos valley of Texas, and south hundreds of miles into central Mexico. Their cousins, the Lipan Apaches of south Texas, also passed through the Davis Mountains, as would the most feared warriors of the southern Plains, the Comanches (whose name derived from the Ute word for "enemies"). It was no coincidence that so many groups with aggressive tendencies traversed the region, given the harshness of the landscape for people with limited technology and resources. Antonio de Espejo, the first Spanish explorer to walk through Limpia Canyon (1582-83), noted the difficulty of conquest

¹Unless otherwise cited, information in this chapter is taken from Robert Wooster, History of Fort Davis, Texas (Santa Fe, NM: National Park Service, 1990).
awaiting Spain if it wished to recreate in far west Texas its successes of Mexico and Peru. Thus it was no surprise that the first permanent Spanish settlement of the Southwest, the New Mexico-bound party under Don Juan de Onate, followed not Espejo's route north along the Rio Concho and Pecos River, but the more westerly Rio Grande in 1598 to the northern Pueblo communities near modern-day Santa Fe.

The story of the Spanish Southwest has been analyzed at great length, first with the "Borderlands" scholarship of Herbert Bolton in the 1920s and 1930s, and later with the "Chicano school" of the 1960s and 1970s. Each disagreed with the other's assumptions about the merits of Spanish intrusion north from Mexico; the Borderlands interpretation heralding the glamour of the conquistadors, while the Chicanos decried the elitism and violence of the soldiers, settlers, and priests. For west Texas, however, the story was more complex. No major Spanish communities were founded along the lower Rio Grande, nor were Catholic priests any more successful with proselytizing at their missions. Not until 1760 (some six generations after Onate's journey) did the Spanish appear south of modern-day Fort Davis to erect El Presidio del Norte (the present-day border town of Presidio) to protect the Guadalupe mission. Thus the Trans-Pecos region knew little of the struggles that shaped the history of New Mexico and California, where Spaniard and Native fought and accommodated each other's presence, and where both groups created the tragic legacy of victimization and the birth of "La Raza," the "new race" of mixed people that emanated from three centuries of Spanish-Indian interaction.

Upon the eviction in 1821 of the Spanish royal government from Mexico and the Southwest, the new leadership of the Republic of Mexico assumed control of the Trans-Pecos region. They could not, in their single generation of management of the Southwest, overcome the challenges of environment and ethnicity that had stymied Spanish royal officials. Mexico, with little money and less experience, could not carve out of the region a permanent presence to avail itself of the resources awaiting the next conqueror, the young United States of America. In 1830, Lieutenant Colonel Jose Ronquillo did petition Mexican authorities for the grant of a 2,345-square mile section of the Trans-Pecos that included the Davis Mountains and the future Fort Davis. But the impending crisis to the east, known as the Texas Revolution, drew the attention of Mexican leaders like President Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana away towards San Antonio. From the loss of the Alamo in 1836 to the declaration of Texas independence (1836), Mexico had little time to contemplate the uses of the Davis Mountains, leaving the area for the Americans to conquer and develop in the 1840s and 1850s.

That experience began within months of the arrival in 1846 of U.S. forces in the Southwest under General Stephen Watts Kearny. Kearny focused his attention on the annexation of New Mexico and the conquest of California. Following the Mexican American War, U.S. officers fanned out across the Southwest to record information for future military and civilian use. The U.S. Army, under the command of Captain William Randolph Marcy, passed one hundred miles north of the future site of Fort Davis in the fall of 1849, along what is today the route of Interstate 20. In March of that year, Marcy sent a detachment under the command of Lieutenants William H.C. Whiting and William F. "Baldy" Smith to survey West Texas. They followed an old Indian trail through a pass which they named "Wild Rose," and Whiting called the stream that
flowed through the mountains "Limpia." Beyond the pass in a grove of cottonwood trees, the Whiting-Smith party stopped at what they called "Painted Comanche Camp;" the future site of Fort Davis.

The Army survey had been undertaken because of the surge of travelers through the Southwest to the California gold fields, discovered in January 1848 but not publicized until the following year. Known as the "49ers," these goldseekers took a series of routes westward, the most promising being the San Antonio-El Paso road through the Trans-Pecos. Because of its level conditions, all-weather access, and the wood and water of the Davis Mountains, the road appealed to travelers who faced more taxing routes either around South America, or across the high-walled Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada. The presence of nomadic Indian tribes in the region also required the security services of the Army, and in 1854 the War Department sent to the Davis Mountains Brevet Major General Persifor Smith to establish the first Fort Davis.

Smith had come to far west Texas to open a series of six posts, and to secure the transcontinental route of the 32nd parallel outlined by Congress in the 1853 Pacific Railway surveys. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis (for whom the fort and mountains were named) had sought a string of forts along the Rio Grande, but Smith informed his superiors that the valley was too barren and forbidding for ease of travel. By suggesting the Limpia Canyon for location of six companies of the Eighth Infantry, Smith guaranteed the presence in west Texas of military forces that would last for the next five decades. Smith began by negotiating with John James, a large landowner in the Davis Mountains, to lease to the Army 640 acres for the post, with annual rent of $300. The government also received a purchase option to exercise within five years at $10 per acre; an option that the Army never pursued.

Little remains of this first military site in the Davis Mountains, but official records indicate that Smith and his successors in command prior to 1860 grappled with the same conditions of environment, ethnicity, and isolation that had plagued the efforts of Spain and Mexico. In 1854 the soldiers of the 8th Infantry constructed either tents or modest "jacales" of oak and cottonwood pickers, neither of which could withstand the harshness of the west Texas winter. Soon thereafter the troops processed lime in a kiln built some thirty miles from the fort, and also went into the Davis Mountains for lumber, which they milled on site. By 1857 the post had permanent barracks built of stone, although most structures still had a temporary look about them. Uncertainty about the final location of the Pacific railroad and access routes through the Davis Mountains kept Congress from funding Fort Davis adequately, although troop strength by the mid-1850s stood at 400, making the fort one of the West’s largest.

The pre-Civil War Army never had the numbers nor funds to effect substantial change in the patterns of Indian migration or attacks upon travelers. In order to meet demands for protection with limited resources, Secretary of War Davis acquired from Congress $30,000 for his "camel experiment," wherein the Army purchased camels from the Middle East and brought them to the American Southwest for use in the deserts. On July 17, 1857, former U.S. Navy Lieutenant Edward F. Beale led the Camel Corps through Fort Davis enroute to their posting in Arizona, and in 1859 the camels were used again to locate a more direct route from San Antonio to the fort. The experiment,
despite the worthiness of the animals, failed in large measure because of costs (support of one camel corpsman was two to four times that of infantry), and because of the offensive smell and behavior of the camels. When Secretary Davis left office in 1857, the camel corps lost its chief advocate, and by the start of the Civil War the experiment had ended.

Life at the post before 1861 bore a strong resemblance to the more prominent post-Civil War Fort Davis. Stage and mail service came within one mile of the fort, with the stop known as "La Limpia." Soon thereafter, attacks upon mail trains by Mescalero Apaches had begun, and Fort Davis troops spent a good deal of time chasing them through the mountains to Mexico. Duty at the post in time of peace, however, was as boring as anywhere else in the isolated West. Officers complained about low pay, high prices caused by transportation difficulties, and the fear of wasting their careers in the middle of nowhere. Enlisted men at pre-Civil War Fort Davis were over 50 percent foreign born. According to the 1860 U.S. Census, only six of the 94 soldiers at Fort Davis came from rural backgrounds (even though the nation as a whole was only 20 percent urban). Their diet paralleled that of other frontier outposts; heavy on such high-energy substances as starch, carbohydrates, and sugars. The post commanders, with no American farms nearby, purchased fruits and vegetables from Mexico. There too went soldiers on leave for recreation, though many found the Mexican "ambiente" too exotic for their tastes. This ethnic mingling influenced the civilian community that surrounded the fort. The 1860 census revealed that 50 of the 70 residents were Hispanic, and nearly all the adults worked for the post as laundresses, laborers, servants, and stockmen.

As the nation moved by 1860 to the brink of civil conflict, the U.S. Army began removing troops from its western outposts to prepare for engagements in the East. That year Lieutenant Colonel Washington Seawell, commander at Fort Davis, asked his superiors to remove his forces to San Antonio, which the Army agreed to do. In 1860 also, voters in Texas were asked if they wished to secede from the Union. Fort Davis residents, linked politically and economically to the national government, decided 48-0 to reject secession. Unfortunately, the Texas electorate, angry not only at the demands of northerners to end slavery, but also at the failure of the Army to stop Indian raiding, decided to leave the Union. General David Twiggs, commander of the U.S. Military Department of Texas, then surrendered all army posts (including Fort Davis) in February 1861 to the Confederate States of America (CSA), and in April 1861 the Fort Davis troops began their retreat to San Antonio.

Remaining behind at the abandoned site were several Hispanic families, plus the German immigrant Anton Dietrick (known locally as "Diedrick Dutchover"), who had married into an Hispanic family and become a substantial landowner and rancher. Rebel forces surprised the Fort Davis units on the road to San Antonio, who then were captured and held until their release in 1863. Soon after abandonment, CSA recruits came to the fort to create a garrison to protect west Texas against Indian raids, as the tribes showed no respect for the enemies of the rebel adversaries, the Union Army. By July 1861, all but twenty of the CSA troopers stationed at Fort Davis had left with Lieutenant Colonel John Baylor on his invasion of southern New Mexico and Arizona, leaving the
Trans-Pecos vulnerable to attack by the Mescaleros. This in turn contributed to the embarrassing venture of August 11, 1861, when CSA Lieutenant Reuben E. Mays and his party rode out of Fort Davis only to be decimated by Mescalero Apaches.

By October of that year, the CSA could only staff Fort Davis with 62 troopers. Then in November came Brigadier General Henry H. Sibley, whose three regiments of Texas Mounted Volunteers were on their way to their ill-fated confrontation in northern New Mexico at the Battle of Glorieta Pass. Upon his defeat at the hands of a combined force of Union regulars, and New Mexico and Colorado Volunteers, Sibley again passed through Fort Davis, taking with him the remaining rebel troops. Apaches then came down out of the hills to destroy what remained of Fort Davis, driving Diedrick Dutchover and his party staying at the post to the safety of Presidio. Ironically, that last unit of CSA soldiers at Fort Davis had been predominantly Hispanic, led by Captain Angel Navarro.

The return of Union forces to west Texas took some time, as the war in the East moved toward closure in 1864-1865. The departmental commander of New Mexico, Brigadier General James H. Carleton, had sent down from Santa Fe in September 1862 a party under the command of Captain E.D. Shirland. The Union troops found Fort Davis mostly in ruins, with furnishings and supplies sold by the CSA to the Hispanic residents of the border. Not until 1865 would Army forces reoccupy the west Texas region, and even then the focus was on either the presence in Mexico of French troops under the leadership of Maximilian, or the need to implement the policies of Reconstruction in eastern Texas. Yet the quickened pace of travel along the San Antonio-El Paso road after the war brought a new round of Indian raiding, which the Army met in 1867 by reopening Fort Davis. Two years later the post had become the headquarters for the Presidio command of the 5th Military District of Texas, and the fort would remain in operation throughout the height of the Indian wars of the 1870s and 1880s.

By orders of the Department of Texas, the Army staffed Fort Davis in 1867 with companies of the Ninth Cavalry, composed of black soldiers recruited for the segregated units created after 1866 to permit freed slaves to serve their country in uniform (as they had done in the latter stages of the Civil War). Eventually all four black units would be assigned to Fort Davis: the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the 24th and 25th Infantry. Led at first by Lieutenant Colonel Wesley Merritt, a Civil War hero, the 9th Cavalry had over 50 percent Civil War veterans. The fort contributed to the re-establishment of the nation's military presence throughout west Texas and southern New Mexico, with several posts housing black troopers. Merritt set his soldiers and civilian employees to work rebuilding Fort Davis outside the canyon walls of the first site, using two steam-powered sawmills to cut timber. Soldiers also quarried sandstone from the nearby cliffs, and burned lime for mortar at the post.

Expansion of the fort led to more encounters with Indians in the Trans-Pecos (19 in all from 1869-1877), which in turn drew attention to the security provided by Fort Davis. In 1871 Lieutenant Colonel William ("Pecos Bill") Shafter took command as increased Indian activities throughout west Texas reduced the fort to 110 soldiers. Shafter’s successor, Colonel George Andrews, commanded Fort Davis from 1872-1878,
and sent out few parties to fight Indians. Much of the black troopers' duty involved protecting the stage and mail stations and routes, along with construction work at Fort Davis. By the late 1870s the troopers had worked on military road construction, and strung 91 miles of telegraph wire as part of the El Paso-San Antonio communication link. Robert Wooster, in his *History of Fort Davis, Texas* (1990), noted that many civilians in the area were white CSA sympathizers who saw the Army as a symbol of their defeat, while free black soldiers were reminders of the "lost world" of the Confederacy. Often the stage and mail drivers disliked the black Army escorts, even though the stage company owners preferred to use soldiers rather than pay for their own scouts and guards.

The volume of Indian raiding did not abate throughout the early 1870s, and at one point officials from the U.S. customs office and the Office of Indian Affairs called for removal of troops from Fort Davis to Presidio. The state of Texas stepped in to help the U.S. Army with law enforcement on the frontier, dispatching in 1880 a unit of the famed "Texas Rangers" to Fort Davis. Like their civilian counterparts, the Rangers were often rebel veterans who opposed the presence of black soldiers in west Texas. Despite this attitude, the Army commanders not only continued the use of the 9th Cavalry; they also employed in the 1870s members of the famed "Seminole Negro scouts," formed by blacks intermarried with Seminole Indians who had fled the Indian Territory before 1860 to find shelter in Mexico. The scouts worked out of several posts in west Texas, and provided invaluable service with their stamina, knowledge of the land and of Indian ways, and their seeming indifference to the racial animosity generated by their presence.²

Activity at Fort Davis reached its peak in 1880, when the prominent Warm Springs chief, Victorio, refused to return to the Apache reservation at San Carlos, Arizona. He wished instead to have a reservation at Ojo Caliente in the San Mateo Mountains. John Briggs, a post guide at Fort Davis, was sent to inspect the Mescalero reservation in response to rumors that it had become a supply center for potential outbreaks by Mescaleros and Chiricahuas. The latter bands, led by Geronimo, had frightened settlers from Tucson to El Paso in the 1870s, and fears remained that they would seek shelter in the mountainous areas along the Mexican border. The Army in anticipation of this action also built in August 1879 Camp Pena Colorado, a "sub-post" to the east of Fort Davis (south of modern-day Marathon). On July 30, 1880, U.S. forces under the command of Colonel Benjamin Grierson, soon to become commander at Fort Davis, met Victorio's band at the Battle of Tinaja de las Palmas, south of the modern-day Sierra Blanca. After another fight with Victorio north of Van Horn, Texas, (Rattlesnake Springs), Victorio withdrew across the Rio Grande. Grierson's troops drove Victorio into Mexico, where Mexican soldiers under Colonel Joaquin Terrazas killed him in battle. Fort Davis and the Trans-Pecos would see no more major confrontations with

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²For information on the black Seminoles, see Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1993).
the Apaches, although on October 18, 1880 a band of Apaches under the war chief Nana stole horses from the fort's grazing pasture.

Perhaps because of the strong presence of U.S. forces in the Davis mountains, Fort Davis did not experience the engagement of places like the Little Bighorn Battlefield, Big Hole Battlefield, and other western military historic sites now managed by the National Park Service. Yet life at the post in the years after the Civil War, especially beyond 1880, was at once tedious and colorful. Robert Wooster defined "health, race, and discipline" as the critical variables for commanders and soldiers alike at the fort. As a frontier site, Fort Davis (both town and post) had its share of violence and conflict; both exacerbated by the awkward presence of black troopers in large numbers. Wooster noted the story that the Jesse Evans gang, led by an associate of the New Mexican outlaw, Billy the Kid, had come down in 1880 from the Lincoln County wars to harrass the citizenry of the Davis Mountains. The Texas Rangers based at Fort Davis had captured Evans, and rumors flew that the "Kid" would appear in town to rescue his friend. No such event transpired, but its potential demonstrated the uncertainty of law and order in the Trans-Pecos area in the late nineteenth century.

Matters of hygiene and health care, always a problem in the close quarters of military life, underwent scrutiny at Fort Davis because of the post's isolation and difficult mission. Assistant Surgeon Daniel Wiesel came to Fort Davis in 1868 with orders to improve conditions of diet, exercise, and personal cleanliness. He instituted a post garden tended by soldiers to increase the supply of fresh fruits and vegetables, and also prescribed more bathing in Limpia Creek to ward off parasites and germs. Under Wiesel, the mortality rate at Fort Davis was one-third of the Army's average, as was the rate of illness. Medical discharge, a common problem throughout the service, stood at Fort Davis at 60 percent of the service average. Wiesel and his successors, however, had less opportunity to reduce the scourge of alcoholism, which afflicted all military posts in the West.

Racial dynamics posed their share of challenges to the staff and line of Fort Davis, given the post's location near Mexico, its hosting of the black units of a segregated Army, and the isolated conditions that bred both cultural accommodation and cultural stress. Intermarriage between soldiers and local women was usually limited to black-Hispanic liaisons; a situation somewhat surprising given Texas' proscriptions on interracial marriage. More sensational for Fort Davis, however, was the celebrated court-martial in 1881 of the post commissary officer, Second Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper, the first black graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Upon graduation from the academy in 1877, Flipper had served at Fort Sill, Indian Territory, under the future Fort Davis commander, Colonel Benjamin Grierson. Flipper came to Fort Davis in 1880, but less than one year later faced charges of mismanagement of post funds. His books were poorly kept, and he could not account for $2,400 in receipts. He sought to cover the shortfall with royalty payments pending from his upcoming autobiography; a situation which never materialized. Post gossip held that Flipper had been too bold with the sister of one of the white officers at the fort, escorting her on buggy rides on Sunday afternoons that scandalized other officers and white citizens in town. At his court-martial hearing, held in the post chapel, other residents of Fort Davis
collected over $1,700 in one day to help Flipper meet his expenses, but the military tribunal stripped him of his commission for "conduct unbecoming of an officer and a gentleman." Flipper then left the service and moved to El Paso, and started a second career in the Southwest and in Mexico as a mining engineer and translator of Spanish.

The irony of the Flipper experience was that on balance, black soldiers had more opportunity within the service than they would have had as civilians in segregated Texas. The post chaplains held classes in the chapel for soldiers who wanted to learn to read and write; something denied by the mid-1870s to many blacks in both the North and South as Reconstruction came to an end. The post library boasted in 1876 a total of 1,600 volumes, and soldiers and officers alike utilized its services. Then under the command of Colonel Grierson (1882-1885), Fort Davis witnessed its last major initiative for upgrading and improvement of facilities to benefit the lives of the soldiers. Grierson, well known for his Indian-fighting and his support of black units, arrived in the Davis Mountains after the major confrontations with Indians had ended. General William T. Sherman, commanding general of the Army, had wanted to locate all primary western posts along railroad routes for matters of efficiency and economy of service. This jeopardized Fort Davis, as the Army in 1884 made Camp Pena Colorado a separate post, built Camp Rice (near old Fort Quitman) in 1882 as a subpost of Fort Davis, and even stationed Fort Davis troops for a time in 1882-1883 at Presidio.

Under Colonel Grierson, Fort Davis held off these encroachments, and expanded its troop strength in 1884 to 39 officers and 643 men. The commander also petitioned his superiors to expend $81,000 for post improvements from 1882-1885, not all of which he received. At the same time, Grierson was motivated (like other officers of the day) by a desire for his own financial security. A larger post, with more construction work for local contractors, would also create the impression of economic vitality that would draw new settlers. The colonel set out to purchase or lease lands in the Trans-Pecos area, owning at one time nearly 45,000 acres, which included 126 town lots in the community of Valentine, west of Fort Davis on the road to El Paso. In like manner, the commander of the black Seminole scouts, Lieutenant John Bullis, acquired title to 53,500 acres of land in Pecos County to the north of the post.

Fort Davis and the surrounding area never grew as Grierson had hoped, even though he and his family labored to put down roots in the Davis Mountains. Opportunities for his soldiers also slipped away as the Indian wars began to fade from memory, making Fort Davis vulnerable to budget-cutting officials in the War Department and the administration of President Grover Cleveland. Grierson and his officers were also aware of the Hispanic "red-light" district one half mile north of the post called "Chihuahua." By 1880 the town of Fort Davis (some 792 people) would be over 67 percent Hispanic. There soldiers found entertainment, excitement, and sin in equal measure away from the prying eyes of the white townsfolk or of their own officers.

By 1885 Grierson realized that his tenure at Fort Davis would be limited, and in March the 10th Cavalry received orders to transfer to Whipple Barracks in north-central Arizona. There they would participate in the campaign in Mexico to find Geronimo, while their white replacements, the Third Cavalry, would oversee the gradual abandonment of the fort on Limpia Creek. The post-military future of Fort Davis was
already arriving, as in the late-1880s a Presbyterian minister named William Bloys would preach in the post chapel on alternate Sundays with Methodist and Baptist clergy. The town also clung to its Republican sympathies, given the long relationship with military personnel and defense spending in the Davis Mountains. Conditions deteriorated as budget cuts made it more difficult to maintain the adobe structures, and the limited water supply contributed to diseases like dysentery. Once the last scout for Indians was completed in February 1888, it would be but a matter of time before the U.S. Army called upon Fort Davis to close its doors.

The decision to deactivate one of the West’s more celebrated posts came in 1891, when Secretary of War Redfield Proctor realigned the West’s military installations. The last major encounter between the Army and Indian resistance had ended at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in December 1890. While tragic, this incident had reminded military officials that few tribes any longer posed a threat to the well-being of American settlement. Fort Davis, isolated and distant from railroad traffic (the nearest railhead was 20 miles southwest at Marfa), and situated on land that the military did not own, thus became a casualty of the changing dynamics of western military defense. In an interesting twist, the local elite did not engage in the supplication familiar to many other western communities in danger of losing their major source of federal income. Perhaps because most of the community was non-white, there was little awareness of the means of influencing the federal government to maintain a military post that the service no longer found useful. Perhaps the low incomes of Fort Davis residents also kept them from funding a full-scale lobbying effort. Perhaps the small number of concerned citizens limited their appeal. For whatever reason, in June 1891 the last soldiers marched out of the post and down Limpia Creek on their way to history.

Those soldiers, settlers, and service workers at Fort Davis could not have known of the fascination that was already building among military buffs and historians alike for the rapidly disappearing western frontier, and its symbols of conquest and achievement. It is not surprising that two years after the closure of Fort Davis, a young history professor from the University of Wisconsin, Frederick Jackson Turner, would deliver to an audience of academics in Chicago his now-famous "Frontier thesis." In that forty-page treatise marked by powerful phraseology and sweeping generalization, Turner would speak as much to the uncertain future of large urban centers, advanced technology, and the impersonal nature of twentieth century life, as he would the bygone days of forests, fields, and streams of the "mythic West" of his youth. The longing for a simpler life that Turner suggested to his listeners (and later legions of readers) might explain how the struggle of soldiers at Fort Davis to wrest the Trans-Pecos wilderness from nature and the Native bands who called it home would become, some three generations later, the location of Fort Davis National Historic Site.
CHAPTER TWO

Closing a Fort, Preserving a Memory:
Private Power and Public Initiative in Fort Davis,
1890-1941

When then—Senator Redfield Proctor alighted from his stagecoach in Fort Davis in the late 1880s, he observed a community and post whose future neither he nor they could predict for the coming century. At the time the chairman of the U.S. Senate Military Affairs Committee, Proctor wanted to see for himself the value of retaining Fort Davis in the post-Indian wars age. Carlyle Raht, author of *The Romance of Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country* (1918), interviewed people who remembered the eastern senator’s visit a generation earlier. Wearing a top hat and frock coat more appropriate for the halls of Congress than the streets of west Texas, Proctor ignored the fact that, in the words of Raht, "up to this time, the Government had been installing modern conveniences, such as bath tubs and plumbing, in the post buildings." The Vermont senator instead "found a very dry desert country, upon which he pronounced the verdict of 'no good.'" Since no other of Proctor’s colleagues would visit Fort Davis before voting for its abandonment, the town and surrounding Davis Mountains would lose the steady funding, prestige, and security that the Army had provided for nearly five decades.1

Thrown upon its own resources, the community of Fort Davis spent years weaning itself from the cycle of dependency that military spending created in the American West. The presence of the U.S. Army had opened the land for Anglo settlement. In addition, the purchase of beef, foodstuffs, and services for the officers and men of the fort brought steady wages at national rates; money that the thinly populated Davis Mountains could not have generated internally. The circle of ranchers around Fort Davis, whose economic and political power would grow with the absence of federal authority in the early twentieth century, might not have prospered amid the excellent grazing conditions that the mountains offered: good water, temperate climate (easily twenty to twenty five degrees cooler in summer than the surrounding Texas southern plains), and the black grama grasses that gave nourishment to cattle. Thus the forces of nature that had attracted Indians centuries before worked again to sustain the Anglo population, although the dynamics of power would shift from public to private initiative as the decades of the twentieth century progressed.

T.E. Fehrenbach, longtime historian of Texas, wrote about the meaning of the cattle business to west Texas, and its related impact upon race and class differences in the Lone Star state. "Texas, because of the Civil War," said Fehrenbach, "the interminable frontier, and the problems of the arid western half, was about two generations behind the dominant Northern tier of states in social trends and developments." These conditions of history, economics, and environment created "a

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1Carlyle G. Raht, *The Romance of Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country* (Odessa, TX: The Rahtbooks Company, 1963), 313.
tendency for the large cattle ranches of the 1870s and 1880s to consolidate and grow much larger in the next decades. Yet limited access to transportation and communication networks that crisscrossed the nation restricted the pace of change in far west Texas. Given this isolation, said Fehrenbach in his book *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (1985), "the whole history of Anglo-Texas was a history of conquest of men and soil, and with the closing of the last frontier no such powerful thrust and impetus could merely die."²

What separated Texas, especially its rural plains and mountains, from other parts of the nation was the rise of the urban-industrial society on the East Coast and around the Great Lakes. Ironically, refugees from the social and economic problems caused by that shift from farm to city in the late nineteenth-century found in the Davis Mountains a sanctuary from crime, violence, disease, and stress resulting from the rush to develop America's resources. These competing perspectives of agrarian and urban life would persist in the Davis Mountains throughout the twentieth century, even as local interests sought consensus on the creation of the Fort Davis National Historic Site. Had it not been for cities, there would have been no markets for the cattle that Texas ranchers produced. Had it not been for eastern investors, there would have been no capital to purchase land, stock, and hire labor on the great Davis Mountain ranches. Had it not been for wealthy tourists and "lungers [victims of tuberculosis and other respiratory ailments]," there would not have been the sophisticated gentry who promoted preservation of the town and its abandoned military post. And had it not been for the federal government, there would not have been the means to recapture the history of old Fort Davis for future generations to visit and admire.

It is ironic that the story of Fort Davis and its surrounding area has not been told from this angle; a phenomenon that reflects as much the maturing of the history of America (and of Texas) as it does the avoidance or denial of local citizens to delve into their storied past. A statistical analysis of the nation and of Jeff Davis County reveals patterns of economic and ethnic reality that influenced the work of Fort Davis boosters, as well as officials from the National Park Service who came several times into the Davis Mountains to weigh the merits of the area's history. What emerges are the similarities and differences between west Texas and the nation, as evidenced by Fehrenbach's contention that the Lone Star state lagged one-half century behind the country in economic and social evolution.

The last time that the U.S. census bureau sent enumerators to Fort Davis while its military post remained active was the fateful year of 1890, when Frederick Jackson Turner realized that the statistical "frontier" had "closed." The Wisconsin professor wrote that a lack of open and free land would halt the American sweep across the continent; a phenomenon to which he ascribed the nation's sense of democracy and opportunity. Turner's generalizations about this statistic ignored the fact that two-thirds of all people west of the Mississippi River in 1890 lived in communities of 2,500 or more (hardly "rural" by nineteenth century standards), or that only eight million people

resided in the entire West. This created the anomaly that historian Gerald D. Nash called an "oasis civilization," which he described as people gathering in large urban centers and avoiding the isolation, distance, and harshness of the rural West.  

Numbers mean little without evidence of human interaction and purpose. Yet statistics for Jeff Davis County (created in 1887 out of the vast Presidio County that stretched to the Rio Grande) reveal the scale of land, and the limits of human habitation, that left the Davis Mountains outside Turner's thesis of a "lost" West. In 1890 the county had 1,922 square miles (which would expand by 1930 to 2,263 square miles). Its total population was 1,394 (a density of three-quarters of a person per square mile), of whom 558 were women and 836 were men; a ratio not uncommon in military communities surrounded by ranches (both of which were populated primarily by men). In terms of racial and ethnic backgrounds, Jeff Davis County in 1890 had 37 blacks still remaining, despite the departure five years earlier of the black Army units, which had secured the Davis Mountains for Anglo control. Far more prominent were Hispanics, whom the census had yet to differentiate statistically (this would not occur systematically until 1970). Under the category of "foreign born," Mexico claimed 270 residents of Jeff Davis County, with other countries only in single figures. Native-born Hispanics were identified as "white" for census purposes, although that would not be the social definition in Texas or the Davis Mountains.

Starting in 1900, patterns of change and continuity without the influence of the Army became quite apparent in the census data. The county's population fell 17.5 percent (to 1,150), while the state of Texas grew 36.4 percent (to three million). Nearly all of Jeff Davis County's decline came among "whites" (down from 1,352 in 1890 to 1,107 in 1900). Blacks increased to 43 that year, and more striking was the rate of black literacy. Two-thirds of black adult males were literate in 1900, while only 48 percent of Anglo and Hispanic males could read and write. The overall male-female ratio had also closed by then, with the county having 642 men and 508 women of all ages. Family size had also grown to 4.4 persons, a figure still less than the Texas average of 5.1 members in a statistical family.

What these numbers seemed to reflect was the natural decline of the Davis Mountains population base caused by the closure of the post, along with the stabilization of sex ratios, family size, and balance of ethnic groups brought to the area by military service and support. But the emergence of the cattle kingdom mentioned by Fehrenbach also accelerated in the early twentieth century, as families expanded their acreage and their power in the community. Lucy Miller Jacobsen and Mildred Bloys Nored, authors of *Jeff Davis County, Texas* (1993), noted how "after 1880, Southerners moved into Jeff Davis County to challenge the northern, Republican, federal influence" created by the

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4Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900.

5Ibid.
"Jobs at Fort Davis became progressively scarce" in the 1890s, as the national economy sank with the Panic of 1893. "Many Hispanic families," said Jacobsen and Nored, "as well as others, moved to Shafter to work in the mines," while railroad construction around Alpine and Marfa drew still more Fort Davis families and individuals. Sealing the fate of many was Mother Nature, which in 1891 brought "an exceedingly dry year followed by a bitter winter."6

The same aridity that contributed to what local rancher Clay Miller called in 1995 the "highly cyclical" nature of the west Texas cattle business, provided a haven for urbanites with respiratory illnesses, and also for east Texans who contracted humid-climate diseases like malaria. Jacobsen and Nored spoke of the arrival in the 1890s of "health seekers," whose physicians prescribed the dry air and high altitude of places like Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Colorado Springs and Denver, Colorado. When these patients and their families came to the Davis Mountains, they found few accommodations for their indefinite recuperation. The grounds of the fort thus became their lodging, where the "lungers" shared space with Hispanic families who could not afford housing in town, and with "expectant mothers [from surrounding ranches who] waited out their terms there with friends or relatives." For a time a recovered tuberculosis patient, William Pruett, built a tent sanitorium five miles north of the fort, and also housed lungers' families in tents east of town. Health care thus created economic opportunity in the Fort Davis area, as did the arrival after 1900 of people whom Jacobsen and Nored called "the wealthy of pre-air conditioned Houston and Galveston [who] discovered Fort Davis as a summer retreat." They built expensive homes with wide, screened porches along Court Street, hired servants from the surrounding area, and created a life that the locals referred to as "Millionaire's Row."7

More evidence of this stability in the Fort Davis community came in the late 1880s, when ministers of several Protestant denominations came to the Davis Mountains to preach to the soldiers, their families, and the ranching community. The most prominent of these was Dr. William B. Bloys, born in Tennessee in 1847 and a graduate of the famed Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. Reverend Bloys and his wife first came to Coleman, Texas, where for nine years he ministered to that rural community. In 1888 he too came to the Davis Mountains for his health, spending 29 years as the representative of the Presbyterian faith in the area. Because he had no church at first, Reverend Bloys used the chapel at the fort, and because he had no congregation he rented a buckboard and rode around town inviting children to Sunday school and adults to the service. Indicative of the multiracial character of Fort Davis was the receptive audience that Bloys found among Hispanics, whom the minister reached through the translations of Robert Fair, a black veteran who remained in town after the departure of the black units and who served as custodian of the post in the early 1890s.

6Lucy Miller Jacobsen and Mildred Bloys Nored, Jeff Davis County (Fort Davis, TX: Fort Davis Historical Society, 1993), 151,158.

7Ibid., 158; Mary Williams, "Administrative History, Fort Davis National Historic Site," unpublished manuscript (MS), Fort Davis Library (cited as FODA Library).
Equally important was Bloys’ outreach to ranching families with his annual summer campmeeting, which served as much a function of social gathering as it did religious instruction and worship. It was people like Bloys who set about to change the character of the town of Fort Davis, and to adjust the community to the departure of the military. In a story written in 1963 entitled, "History of the First Presbyterian Church of Fort Davis, Texas," the unidentified author called Fort Davis in the 1880s "a lawless frontier town." Among the forces contributing to "its unsavory reputation" were "the vast distance from centers of civilization," the "general turbulence and disorder of the post-Civil War days," the "unruly garrison of Negro soldiers," the "recent arrival of cattlemen and other pioneers, many of them literally a law unto themselves," and most distressing, "the presence of nine wide-open saloons!" The Presbyterian church took credit years later for the "steady and persistent influence" that brought "gradual change to a law-abiding community." By imparting piety and rectitude to the area, the Protestant ministers also changed the social and racial dynamics of Fort Davis, in ways that could be seen statistically and anecdotally by the early twentieth century.

The most dramatic demographic change of the early twentieth century came with the departure of black citizens by the 1920s. Even though Jeff Davis County had fewer than two persons per square mile in 1910, the population had rebounded by 46 percent (to 1,678) There had been a decline of nearly one hundred people from "Precinct 1," which encompassed the town of Fort Davis. Yet the western side of the county (Precinct 4), including the ranching areas and the new railroad center at Valentine, had grown from 62 people in 1900 to 606 a decade later, increasing by a factor of ten. The number of blacks grew slightly from 43 to 47, and were now divided by the census enumerators between the category of "black" (12) and "mulatto," or mixed (35). This made the county four percent black, while the state of Texas was 17.7 percent black that year. Of the foreign born, 292 came from Mexico, and only 15 from Germany (the largest European producer of immigrants). Indicative of the county’s deviation from national standards, however, was the statistic on education. Whereas the nation pushed for compulsory attendance under the directions of Progressive reformers like John Dewey, only 44 percent of all school-age children in Jeff Davis County were in attendance in 1910 (by comparison, five of the county’s seven black children went to school). Jeff Davis County changed yet again in the turbulent years of 1910-1920, with the international crisis of World War I creating both opportunities and problems for community maintenance. Farmers and ranchers nationwide were encouraged to "plant from fence to fence for national defense;" a reference to food production for consumption

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8Raht, Romance of Davis Mountains, 337; Mable Bloys, "Fort Davis Presbyterian Church," October 1948, Bloys Chapel (1988) File, FODA Library.


10Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910.
at home and in war-torn Europe. Yet the need for manpower in uniform drew away able-bodied youth everywhere, with many not to return to their rural roots. These factors joined in Jeff Davis County with the outbreak in 1910 of the Mexican Revolution, which was marked by the threat of violence (both real and imagined), and the flight of Mexican citizens northward across the border to seek shelter and employment in American industry and agriculture. This volatility would result in the loss of nearly 12 percent of the county’s population (to 1,445) from 1910-1920. Most striking was the departure of blacks, down from 47 to eight (a loss of 87 percent). Illiteracy rates more than doubled from 9.6 percent in 1910 to 20.9 percent in 1920, with white illiteracy at 11.6 percent and foreign born (primarily Hispanic) at 50.8 percent.\footnote{Ibid.}

Driving this demographic change, and hence the lifestyles of Jeff Davis County residents, was the expansion of large ranches in the Davis Mountains. In 1900 the census bureau had found 48 farms and ranches; in 1910 this had nearly doubled to 91. By 1920 the number had receded by almost one-third, to 62. Thirty-eight of these farms and ranches (over 60 percent) were 1,000 acres or larger, while only ten (16 percent) were 100 acres or less. The average size of these ranches (large and small alike) was 14,958.9 acres, with average dollar value in 1920 at $7.625 million (double 1910's amount of $3.73 million despite fewer farms and ranches). Most revealing of the concentration of power in the hands of large ranchers by 1920 was the total value of cattle: $2.36 million of the $2.42 million (or 98 percent) for all agricultural production in the county.\footnote{Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920.}

The decade of the 1920s was marked nationwide by the statistical "victory" of urban areas over the historical dominance of rural America. For the first time since the census was taken in 1790, cities possessed the majority of all residents (52 percent to be exact). The political power of rural legislators was thus in jeopardy, as the U.S. Constitution dictated apportionment of congressional representation based upon percentages of population. Because rural interests did not want to surrender power to their city cousins, they blocked for the only time in history the reapportionment of congressional districts, so that they would not be outvoted in the nation's capital. Other manifestations of the rise of urban America were the car culture, the entertainment industry (especially Hollywood and the movies), and cultural interaction between blacks and whites in American cities (at once accommodationist and separatist with the coming of the "Jazz Age" and the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan).

From 1920-1930, Texas grew at a pace equal to that of the nation (24.9 percent). This decade saw the rise of urban Texas, with all its attractions and temptations. In Jeff Davis County, the pattern was mixed, as the first five years of the "Roaring 20s" witnessed dramatic migration from outside. The accessibility of the county by car, the open space, and the improved national economy led the county to grow overall by 24.6 percent (nearly the state and national average). Precinct 1 (the town of Fort Davis) grew by 200 people (to 912, or 28 percent). For the first time in the census, the federal
government in 1930 tried to enumerate Hispanics separately from "whites," calling them "Mexicans;" a term that many would repudiate because of the pejorative use of the word by Anglos in the Southwest, and one which the census bureau would discard thereafter until the 1970 enumeration. Yet because of that momentary usage, Jeff Davis County was found to have 1,046 people of "other races," mostly Mexican, for a total of 58 percent Hispanic, 40 percent white, 1.1 percent black (20 people, of whom 18 lived in Fort Davis), and the rest from other nationalities.  

This growth rate, and its concomitant ethnic dimensions, contributed to the rise in illiteracy in the county (up to 30.7 percent from 1920, or an increase of one-third, even faster than the population growth rate as a whole). For native whites, the rate was less than one percent, making nearly the entire increase a function of Hispanic migration. Ten of the fourteen black adults were also illiterate, and nearly all worked in categories of common labor or domestic service. The primary reason for this continued disparity in income and race was the expansion of local ranches, up nearly 30 percent from 1920 (to an average of 18,256 acres). Over 97 percent of all county land (1.784 million acres) was in pasturage in 1930, and nearly 98 percent of that (1.773 million acres) was on ranches of 5,000 acres or more (a doubling of large ranches since 1920). One quirk in the farm and ranch statistics from 1920-1930 was the short-lived attempt of small owners and tenants to gain a foothold in the Davis Mountains. The census bureau analyzed the health of the agricultural economy in mid-decade, and found that the number of county farms and ranches had more than doubled (from 62 to 128), with farm/ranch size shrinking seven percent (to 13,484 acres). Total farm value grew by more than a factor of three in those five years (from $5.161 million to $16.778 million), with the average farm or ranch in Jeff Davis County in 1925 worth nearly 60 percent more than 1920 ($131,079).  

The prosperity of the Twenties did not continue, either nationally or in the Davis Mountains, as the collapse in 1929 of the New York stock market resonated throughout the economy in the desperate years of the Great Depression (the 1930s). Across the country, the value of agricultural production fell over 50 percent, stock prices dropped nearly 90 percent, and by the winter of 1932-1933 the adult unemployed population stood at 33 percent (with an additional 33 percent listed as "underemployed" with fewer hours, wages, or both). Jeff Davis County would suffer along with the rest of America in these years, although the population data was not as conclusive. The 1940 census report found 2,375 people in the county, up nearly 32 percent, and the density finally broke the county’s one person per square mile (still half of Turner’s "frontier" diagnosis of two generations earlier). The town of Fort Davis fell from 912 people to 537 (over 40 percent), while the northeastern quadrant of the county grew by a factor of six (from 106 to 652). Precinct 3 (the southeastern county) grew from 57 in 1930 to 481 (900 percent),

\[\text{Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930.}\]

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
and the growth in far west Jeff Davis County led to incorporation in 1936 of the town of Valentine (499 people, or nearly 92 percent that of Fort Davis).\textsuperscript{15}

Population movement seemed to reflect the ability of the large ranchers to maintain their levels of employment, even though the value of their holdings (land and stock) dropped along with the national totals. The value of cattle in the county fell over 60 percent (to $1.8 million), and all stock declined nearly 40 percent (to $2.257 million), even as the number of farms and ranches grew slightly (from 99 in 1930 to 104 in 1940). One indicator of the meaning of this change was the collapse of the modest fruit and vegetable production of Jeff Davis County: down to a mere $20,250 in 1940 (from $52,676, or a decline of 64 percent). There were in 1939 a total of 25 farms and ranches that sold or traded less than $250, while there were 23 ranches that sold/traded over $20,000 each. The 22 poorest farms and ranches did a mere $2,514 in business combined, while the 30 richest ranches transacted $1.424 million in 1939, for an average of $47,000 per ranch. By comparison, the national minimum wage for hourly labor was 25 cents, and the per capita income for all Americans in 1933 was $400. Thus the poorest quarter of Jeff Davis County farms and ranches produced less than three-fifths of the national average for income, while the wealthiest third produced on average 420 times that amount.\textsuperscript{16}

The disparity of wealth and poverty plaguing Jeff Davis County in the years between the first and second World Wars explained in part the federal government's belief that it had a duty to redress the economic grievances of the Great Depression. Until 1920, most Americans had encountered government primarily through postal clerks, law enforcement officers, and perhaps military service. T.E. Fehrenbach noted how that war had destabilized the urban and farming sectors of the Lone Star state, and how advances in technology (especially the automobile) transformed the landscape. "Texas went from a horse culture to something resembling an automobile culture in one swoop," said Fehrenbach, as "roads hastened economic improvements, urbanization, and school consolidation in almost every region of the state." This process of urbanization (Texas by 1933 was 67 percent rural, closing the gap with the national pattern of 41 percent rural population), "began to drain off some of the misery from the cotton fields." Then the twin ravages of economic collapse and the environmental disaster of the "Dust Bowl," where the southern Plains lost much of their topsoil to winds and the overplowing of new land, created the diaspora from the region to California and the Far West more heralded in John Steinbeck's novel about "Okies" on the "Route 66," \textit{The Grapes of Wrath} (1939).\textsuperscript{17}

Local residents of Fort Davis could not have predicted these conditions when in 1910 they hosted their annual Independence Day celebration. On that Fourth of July, the parade boasted no fewer than 25 automobiles, even though there were no paved roads

\textsuperscript{15}Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Fehrenbach, \textit{Lone Star}, 637, 647, 649-50.
into the Davis Mountains. The state would not build a highway yard in the county until after World War I, prompted by passage in 1916 of the Federal Highway Act, whereby the U.S. government would construct a series of paved roads across the country to expedite commercial and military travel. This did not deter the creation also in 1910 of the Fort Davis "Improvement Club," whose duty it was to promote economic development in the region. Its literature, and that of the *Fort Davis Dispatch* (begun in 1911), mentioned prominently the environmental pleasantness of the Davis Mountains, especially drawing attention to the 5,000-feet altitude of the town.\(^{18}\)

Dramatizing the prospects of a western town was not a new idea, as communities like Los Angeles had grown exponentially in the early twentieth century through a combination of transportation, communications, climate, and advertising. Fort Davis, like its peers throughout the West, hoped that growth could create new jobs, promote land sales, and improve the quality of life in an isolated region. This urge to advertise one's way to economic health had its parallels in the Davis Mountains with the appearance of Carlyle G. Raht, who had visited the area with his father in the summers when he was young. Raht moved to Fort Davis in 1916, determined as a graduate of the University of Texas to write a dramatic story of the "old" West like he had heard from his professors in history. The Austin school in the early twentieth century had become a center for regional study, among whose graduates were J. Frank Dobie, the noted folklorist of tall tales and legends of the Southwest; Herbert Eugene Bolton, a Wisconsin native who admired the stories of Spanish occupation of the area, and who at the University of California would create the "Borderlands thesis" of Spanish history; and Walter Prescott Webb, best known for his pathbreaking study *The Great Plains* (1931), written in the depths of the Depression and the start of the Dust Bowl about the struggle of farmers and ranchers to control the environment of the West. Raht wanted to find his version of all three stories (folklore, Spanish conquest, and cowboy culture) in the Davis Mountains, and his efforts went far to demonstrate to outsiders the distinctiveness of the area, if not their actual history and tradition.

Raht's endeavors were aided by the research of a young reporter named Barry Scobee, whom Raht had met by chance in 1917 in the newsroom of the *San Antonio Express*. Scobee, who had grown up on a Missouri farm dreaming of writing history, asked Raht if he could make a living in the Davis Mountains about which Raht spoke so glowingly. Scobee was described in later years as a "mild-spoken little fellow with a bald head, a good heart, and a sincere likeable character that charmed everyone." Upon his return to Fort Davis, Raht corresponded with Scobee, offering him the opportunity to manage the Hotel Limpia, opened in 1912 to serve the wealthy summer visitors to the area. The constraints of wartime limited the Limpia's income, and by extension Scobee's, and he and his wife Katherine survived only because Raht hired the former reporter to "travel over the area with him in an old flivver to gather material for his book." Scobee volunteered for service in World War I, only to report to basic training as the war ended in Europe. He and his wife left the Davis Mountains for opportunities

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\(^{18}\)Jacobsen and Nored, *Jeff Davis County*, 176-79.
in the Pacific Northwest, and returned in 1925 with the intention of selling stories to popular magazines about the glamour and drama of the old Southwest.¹⁹

The book that Raht and Scobee compiled fit the pattern of excitement and action that gripped audiences' imaginations in the post-World War I era. It also served as the history text for many local residents and visitors, who were fascinated with Raht's stories of derring-do, conquest, outlaws, bandits, and the like. Raht furthered the importance of his work by claiming in the preface: "In gathering my data I have attempted to eliminate the personal viewpoint of the narrator, as well as of myself." He declared that he had "written out of sheer love of the country and a great admiration and respect for the hardy pioneers who had conquered it." Adding to the book's "authenticity," and perhaps its historical irony, was Raht's acquisition of historical documents on the Spanish era (1540-1821) from the "Archivo General Nacional," or National Archives in Mexico City. He then asked Henry O. Flipper, the young black lieutenant court-martialed at Fort Davis in 1881 and now a mining engineer in El Paso, to translate the Spanish documents.²⁰

Raht proceeded to describe Hispanic Texas in the most derogatory terms imaginable. In so doing he merely echoed the sentiments of the day among Anglo Texans, and reinforced local opinion on the inferiority of Hispanics (all of whom were called "Mexicans," even if they were natives of the United States and were considered "white" for census purposes). He also highlighted the class differences of Jeff Davis County by calling the great ranchers "a people who have never felt the cramping littleness of more thickly settled communities." Raht concluded that the ranchers were "literally 'monarchs of all they survey,'" ignoring their own dependence upon eastern markets, investors, technology, and also low-paid wage labor provided by Hispanics.²¹

What made Raht's negative characterization of Hispanics even more important was their "majority-minority" status in town and throughout west Texas. T.E. Fehrenbach wrote that "the Texan attitude toward Hispanic Americans, born out of long and unhappy experience with Mexico, was not essentially hostile; it was rather one of considered domination." After 1900 the Anglo power structure in Texas encouraged blacks to migrate elsewhere, and replaced their work with Mexicans because "the cost of land, irrigation, and crushing freight charges could only be met by using labor cheaper than any other in the United States." These economic imperatives, coupled with the political control that west Texas ranchers had in their communities, meant that "every major social change that came in the twentieth century was forced upon the state of Texas by outside pressures."²²

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¹⁹Anonymous, "Barry Scobee," September 3, 1963, FODA Library; Robert M. Utley to author, n.d. Barry Scobee later became Justice of the Peace, however, he was called "Judge" out of fond respect, but not because of the true title.

²⁰Raht, Romance of Davis Mountains, preface.

²¹Ibid., 343-44.

²²Fehrenbach, Lone Star, 643, 688, 713.
Readers of *The Romance of Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country* thus encountered well-known images of noble Spaniards, free-market cattlemen, and Mexicans whose only place was subservient to the Texas master class. What reinforced Raht's rhetorical style was the banditry of the Southwestern border, popularized in March 1916 by the raid of the Mexican revolutionary Francisco "Pancho" Villa on Columbus, New Mexico, a small border town west of El Paso. Raht emphasized the violence and retaliation on the part of American forces (both Texas Rangers and U.S. Army), which brought wartime conditions to the border that contrasted with the relative tranquility experienced throughout World War I by other parts of the country.

Ignoring the contributions that Hispanics had made to the ranching economy of the region, not to mention the intermarriage of prominent Anglo ranchers and Hispanic women, Raht told his readers: "More often than not the good little blood the peon [Mexican] may have in his veins is contaminated with disease, and, from the mother stock, he rightfully inherits the bloodthirstiness of his Indian forebears." Raht further believed that the Hispanic, "like the Indian, is constitutionally opposed to labor." Referring to the stereotype of the Mexican peasant, Raht declared: "So fixed has become the habit of obtaining a livelihood without work and so in keeping with their natural tendencies, that it is doubtful whether our Southern border will ever be safe, except it be by force of arms." Then in a disjointed conclusion, Raht (whose knowledge of the area extended only to his childhood visits and study at Austin) informed his readers: "Despite all these obstacles, the West-of-the-Pecos country has grown and prospered. Nowhere in the world will be found a higher type of citizenship .... The final settlement of the troubles in Mexico and along the border will insure the future of this great country."

Raht's judgments, which he crafted in his journeys through the Davis Mountains with Barry Scobee, emanated from the stories told to him by the Anglo ranchers and citizens of Fort Davis. Confirming Raht's viewpoint was the segregation of the races in the Fort Davis area; part of the effort of Anglo townspeople to present a homogeneous face to the outside world of investors, tourists, and potential residents. Jacobsen and Nored wrote of earlier racial divisions in town: "There are stories of bodies, mostly children, along the east slope of Sleeping Lion [Mountain]. This area was probably cluttered during the 1870s with the shacks of the families or camp followers of the black soldiers[,] and babies and children who died were simply buried behind the hovels where their parents lived." A "colored school" operated in town from 1888-1895, and Hispanics who did attend school were routed towards the "Mexican school" on the north side of town (the current site of the Dirks-Anderson elementary school just south of the park boundary). White children, by comparison, went to the "American" school on the south side of town (the site of the modern-day Fort Davis High School).

In the early 1900s, Texas state laws separating students by race were applied throughout the town, and children of "mixed blood" (primarily black and Hispanic) were

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23Raht, *Romance of Davis Mountains*, 373, 376, 381.

24Jacobsen and Nored, *Jeff Davis County*, 197, 303, 310.
sent to the "Mexican" school. The legacy of this segregation, said Jacobsen and Nored, was that "after adoption of these new rules, the number of Hispanic children enrolled in school dropped dramatically. Until the late 1920s, education opportunities for Hispanics in Fort Davis [were] minimal at best," with the first Hispanic graduate of Fort Davis High School (Tommy Morales) receiving a diploma in 1939 (this in a county that had been predominantly Hispanic from its inception). The first chief of maintenance at Fort Davis National Historic Site, Pablo Bencomo, would speak of this inequity in 1995 when he remembered how his father, a ranch hand without education himself, came to the "Mexican" school when Pablo was twelve and removed him from class. "My father told me that there was no more need for me to go to school," said Bencomo, and the young man recalled crying at the cattle ranch because he missed the camaraderie and intellectual challenge of his education, even though it was in a segregated setting (his teacher had been John Prude, from a prominent ranching family, who spoke Spanish to the students).

Just as the ethnic and economic realities of Jeff Davis County crystallized in the mid-twentieth century, the boosterism of the Fort Davis business elite and the romanticization of Carl Raht and Barry Scobee brought travelers to the region in larger numbers that ever before. The need for services, such as lodging, dining, recreation, and entertainment, required a different strategy than that employed by the ranchers, whose goal had been maintenance of their economic well-being in an uncertain and highly competitive world of investment and finance. The tourism business was something new to most parts of the West, and local boosters sought to understand not only the tastes of the visitor, but also the potential of the Davis Mountains to bring in revenue and taxes that would anchor the next generation of economic development. The consumerism of the 1920s created middle-class expectations of access to the same amenities as the wealthy had known prior to World War I. Those individuals and communities that could determine the best strategies for luring and retaining the affluent visitor might benefit in the highly competitive business atmosphere of the Roaring Twenties, while those unable to fathom the "leisure economy" growing amidst a society of hardworking people would suffer.

What distinguished the post-World War I focus upon travel and tourism was not merely the appeal of escape and climate, but also the use of history as a lure. Michael Kammen, author of *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (1991), has written of the surge of interest in the 1920s and 1930s about America's historic past, and of the methods applied by enterprising souls to bring in tourists and visitors seeking connections to the culture and heritage of a nation that until recently had only looked forward for guidance. Kammen linked this new fascination with history to the fact that "during the later nineteenth century . . . Americans of all sorts had to confront a new economic order with a stock of assumptions deeply rooted in preindustrial society." By seeking a more pastoral, agrarian world within the confines of urban-industrial life, Americans would become more nostalgic and

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25Ibid., 309, 313; Interview with Pablo Bencomo, Fort Davis, TX, January 4, 1995.
sensitive to the past, even if this distorted both the present and the past that gave rise to
the history being admired. Americans, like their European counterparts, were unfazed
by this contradiction. Kammen thus noted that "another general characteristic that is
commonly shared by tradition-oriented cultures, including the United States after 1870,
is the use of monuments, architecture, and other works of art as a means of
demonstrating a sense of continuity or allegiance to the past." 26

Three forces thus converged in the Davis Mountains in the interwar years
(1920-1940) to advance the story of the region, and by extension the desire of a small
group of locals to create a park at old Fort Davis. Providing services to visitors not only
generated income and attention. It also brought public spending by the state and federal
governments for transportation and communications networks that could increase the
ability of the cattle ranchers to compete in the national marketplace. In addition, the
decaying local economy in the Great Depression could benefit from New Deal social
welfare programs that required little contribution from locals (as they did not rely upon
property taxes from the county). Finally, the rise of the western myth in film and
literature after 1920 solidified a "tradition" in west Texas that made sense to locals,
whether on the ranch or in town. Efforts to tell the Davis Mountains story would thus
combine plans for publicly funded recreation, highway construction, and private
initiatives to graft the national nostalgia for the "old" West onto an area that still echoed
the nineteenth century.

Michael Kammen noted the irony of this national mood in the 1920s, saying that
the decade "marked a pivotal moment in the self-aware marketing of regional traditions:
rodeos, mock cowboy fights, roped-off business districts, and so on." A second
phenomenon of the age was the "determination to democratize tradition" via the
automobile. Henry Ford contributed to both movements (modernization and nostalgia)
by mass-producing inexpensive cars, then preserving the world that mobility threatened
in his "Dearborn Village" outside of Detroit, Michigan. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the
son of the Standard Oil magnate most often linked to the Gilded Age's industrial
capitalists, or "Robber Barons," likewise invested in the rehabilitation of colonial
Williamsburg, Virginia, reproducing the eighteenth century "lost world" of Thomas
Jefferson and the founding fathers. Traveling to historic sites became fashionable, and
Kammen stated that "some roads were constructed or proposed for the exclusive purpose
of facilitating nationalism and tourism." The result of this for America, said Kammen,
would be within a generation the "commercialization of tradition and the modernization
of national memory." 27

Residents of the Davis Mountains had not been strangers to national celebrations,
with the tradition of the Independence Day festivities dating to the nineteenth-century
garrison. Jacobsen and Nored recounted stories of townspeople gathering at the

26 Michael Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture

27 Ibid., 300, 338, 343, 401.
abandoned post hospital, "using the high porch as a table for the tons of food the ladies provided." Hispanic citizens from the nearby neighborhood of Chihuahua came to the post in the late nineteenth century to commemorate the Mexican holidays of "Cinco de Mayo" (Fifth of May), and "Diez y Seis de Septiembre" (Sixteenth of September). The former recalled the 1862 defeat of the invading French army under their leader Maximilian, while the latter marked the end of the Mexican revolution (1810-1821). "There were parades at the old fort," said Jacobsen and Nored, "and one or two seem to have been through the streets of Chihuahua. Bailes [dances] generally followed in the evening." The Anglo population also used the old fort grounds for "community Easter egg hunts," while plays were given in the cottonwood grove east of the fort "to take advantage of the tourist dollar and to offer entertainment to the summer visitors." One such performance, remembered Ellen Yarbro Bailey, was "a Hiawatha pageant . . . probably in the late teens or early 20s." The authors saw nothing inconsistent about this highly romanticized story of Indian life that had been written in nineteenth-century New England by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, presented at a site (Fort Davis) dedicated to the defeat and removal of Indians in west Texas.

These local gatherings were not the sort of historical focus envisioned by the business community of Fort Davis in the years between the world wars. They preferred to emulate the successes of other towns and cities that parlayed private and public funding to enhance their economic well-being. The grounds at Fort Davis had not been a moneymaker for anyone owning them since the departure of the Army, and local boosters wondered how they could utilize this new-found interest in history to their benefit. On December 17, 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt had signed an executive order giving roughly 300 acres of the Fort Davis lands to the General Land Office (GLO), the precursor in the Interior department to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Charged with promotion of public land sales to generate revenue for the government, the GLO leased the site to J.L. Jones of Fort Davis until his death in 1907, whereupon local rancher Frank P. Sproul became "custodian" of the site "without pay." He leased four acres to a tenant farmer, and hoped to receive one-third of the crop as payment.

Two years later the GLO sent William B. Douglass, examiner of surveys, to appraise the land at Fort Davis for subdivision and sale to the public. Accompanied by Jacob P. Weatherby, described as "the present County Judge and a successful merchant," and Charles Mulhern, "one of the wealthiest ranchers . . . and a practical farmer (as is also Judge Weatherby)," Douglass elected to carve out of the fort grounds 29 lots of 9.56 acres each, and one lot of 12.83 acres. This land lay to the east of the actual site of the buildings, which Douglass hoped could be used for grazing. The acreage lacked suitable surface or underground water for irrigation, and also had "volcanic gravel . . . under

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24Closing a Fort, Preserving a Memory, 1890-1941


29Theodore Roosevelt, "Executive Order," December 17, 1906, Administrative History (1906) Murphy File; The Commissioner of the General Land Office (GLO) to the Secretary of the Interior, January 1907; Frank Sproul to the GLO, May 27, 1907, Administrative History (1907) File, FODA Library.
which . . . is a soft limestone." The GLO report conceded that wells could be drilled to a depth of 10-40 feet, allowing agriculture on the properties, but the appraisal described the area as mostly "third rate" and "fourth rate" investments. Douglass believed that the government could expect no more than five to seven dollars per acre. He then described the potential site for prospective buyers, saying that the town had about 600 people, "half of whom are Mexican." Fort Davis had good wagon connections to the railroad at Marfa, as well as daily mail service, "several good stores," and was "reputed to be the healthiest in the state of Texas."

Upon completion of the survey and filing of the notice of sale, the GLO on November 21, 1910, sent James W. Witten to supervise the auction of the thirty lots comprising the "old Fort Davis abandoned military reservation." Witten received bids on twenty-two lots, covering 213.61 acres, and collected checks for a total of $2,272.50. The highest bid for the 9.56-acre parcels was $150, with Mrs. Susan M. Janes, Mr. T.H. Brown, Jr. (who bought two such lots), William J. Ward, and Theodore J. Dumble, all of Fort Davis, acquiring property at this quote. Three Hispanics (Pedro Herrera, Alejandro Olivas, and Jose A. Contreras of Fort Davis) also purchased lots, as did Anton Aggerman, a veteran of duty at the old fort, and Benjamin H. Grierson, Jr. and George M. Grierson, sons of the famed post commander and owners of a local ranch. Only one bidder came from out of town: Allen Mills of Marquez, Texas, who purchased four lots. Wiggins then reported to his superiors in the GLO's Washington headquarters that eight lots remained unsold, and recommended "that no action be taken looking to their reoffering until such time as changed circumstances have created a demand sufficient to justify the expense of further sale."

That moment would not arrive for another 27 years, when in 1937 the GLO divested itself of the eight parcels. By then the status of the land had faded in local people's memory, as in October 1923, R.S. Sproul of Fort Davis wrote to the GLO asking to be made "custodian" of whatever lands remained under federal jurisdiction. This forced the GLO to research its records, and report that only 76.48 acres belonged in the public domain, worth some $720. Because there were no structures standing on the properties, the GLO decided not to accept Sproul's offer, as his "appointment would vest the right in the appointee to use the lands in the said reservation for grazing or other purposes to the exclusion of all others." In addition, the congressional act of July 5, 1884 that governed disbursal of abandoned military lands left no provision for leasing. The GLO was to survey and sell all such lands for no less than $1.25 per acre. William

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30 William B. Douglass, Examiner of Surveys, GLO, to the GLO Commissioner, December 20, 1909, Murphy Land (1909) File, FODA Library.

Spry, GLO commissioner, did promise Sproul that the Fort Davis properties would be released when "there is sufficient evidence to show that the lands will be sold."  

While the public portion of old Fort Davis appealed only to ranchers, the privately held acreage that contained the facilities abandoned by the U.S. Army faced a different future after World War I. The Army had established in 1917 Camp Marfa, as much for protection against Mexican border raids as for preparation for war in Europe. After the war, the Army renamed the facility Fort D.A. Russell (itself the name of a post near Cheyenne, Wyoming in the nineteenth century), and sent troops marching north on occasion to the old Fort Davis grounds for field training. For the next 20 years the South Texas military posts of Forts Clark, Brown and Bliss also utilized the open space at Fort Davis and the surrounding area. But the most active proposals for the post came from local businessmen in search of the economic stimulus of tourism. As early as 1921, a group of Fort Davis civic officials petitioned the Texas legislature to set aside lands in the Davis Mountains for some sort of state park. The following year a banker from Chicago, Harry G. Hershenson, wrote directly to Arno B. Cammerer, acting director of the National Park Service, to seek federal creation of a Davis Mountains park. Hershenson, who may have been a summer visitor to the area, believed that NPS plans were already underway to include the Davis Mountains in the fledgling national park system. Cammerer wrote in response: "As far as we in the Park Service know, no movement has been set on foot to establish such a Park." The major hurdle facing the Davis Mountains was the fact that "Texas has no nationally owned public lands." Locals would have to purchase the desired property and donate it to the government, as "Congress has never yet made an appropriation for the purpose of buying lands to establish a national park." Cammerer wondered if Hershenson had confused the NPS with the Texas state park system, which now had five units, "each of which is governed by a separate commission."  

Hershenson's inquiry signaled a dual track being pursued by local Fort Davis merchants to bring business to their vicinity. Cammerer's reply suggesting the involvement of the state of Texas in the Davis Mountains was met in 1923 by a letter from another Chicago businessman, William Havens, secretary/treasurer of the

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32William Spry, GLO Commissioner, to R.S. Sproul, Fort Davis, TX, October 1, 1923, Murphy (1923) Land File, FODA Library.

33Jacobsen and Nored, Jeff Davis County, 289; Williams, "Administrative History of Fort Davis;" Harry G. Hershenson, Chicago, IL, to the "National Park System," Washington, DC, May 3, 1922; Arno B. Cammerer, Acting NPS Director, to Hershenson, May 5, 1922, Record Group (RG) 79, National Park Service (NPS), Central Consolidated Files (CCF) 1907-1949, Proposed National Monuments, Box 659, Archives II, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, DC (cited as Archives II, NARA, DC).
Figure 4. Fort D.A. Russell Field Maneuvers, A Fifth Cavalry (c.1922), Courtesy of Fort Davis NHS.
American Motor Freight Company. Writing generically to the "United States Government Bureau of Parks," Havens asked for information "as to the state of Texas and the U.S. Government going to have a National Park near Pecos Texas comprising of 300,000 acres on the foot of the Davis Mountains." Havens told the federal government: "I expect to buy some property out that way and would like to know whether this park is even going to exist." He had learned from local sources that the "state of Texas has made no appropriation for the Park," even though he had been led to believe that both the state and federal governments would purchase the lands in Reeves and Pecos counties for such a park.\(^{34}\)

Coming so closely on the heels of the Hershenson letter, Haven's correspondence did not indicate to the park service the extent of the promotional campaign by Fort Davis boosters to bring public funding to the Davis Mountains. B.L. Vipond, acting director of the NPS, wrote to Havens a note almost identical to that sent by Cammerer to Hershenson. Then on May 13, 1924, the NPS learned that Representative Claude Hudspeth of Texas had introduced in Congress HR 9193, "A Bill to establish a national park in the state of Texas." This appears to be the first official request to the NPS for such a facility in Texas, and it called upon the Secretary of the Interior "to purchase at least five thousand acres of land in Jeff Davis County ... to be a national park and dedicated as a public park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States." Even as the NPS told Hershenson and Havens that Congress had never considered purchase of private land to create park units, the Hudspeth measure stated: "That the sum of $100,000 is hereby authorized to be appropriated, out of any moneys in the Treasury of the United States not otherwise appropriated, for the purchase of said land and for other purposes incidental to the creation of said park." Hudspeth did allow for donations of "lands, easements, buildings, and moneys" to the Davis Mountains project, and declared the authority to do so rested in the enabling legislation of 1916 that formed the National Park Service.\(^{35}\)

Although the Hudspeth proposal died in the House, its existence suggested the problems that the park service would have for the next 35 years in creating an NPS unit in the Davis Mountains. Local promoters did not know of the constraints placed by Congress upon the NPS, yet they would champion park status with visitors who then solicited help on their own. In addition, the local boosters saw more value in the 1920s in preservation of natural beauty than historic property. This fit the pattern of conservationist thinking outlined by historian Alfred Runte in his book, *National Parks: The American Experience* (1978). Runte coined the phrase, "the worthless lands thesis," to describe the rationale of the NPS for setting aside vast amounts of public land in the West. "The great majority of Americans took pride in the inventiveness and material

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\(^{34}\)William Havens, Chicago, IL, to the "United States Government Bureau of Parks," Washington, DC, February 20, 1923, RG79, NPS CCF 1907-1949, Box 659, Archives II, NARA, DC.

\(^{35}\)B.L. Vipond, Acting NPS Director, to Havens, February 27, 1923; House of Representatives Resolution (HR) 9193, "A Bill To establish a national park in the State of Texas," May 13, 1924, 68th Congress, 1st session, RG79, NPS CCF 1907-1949, Box 659, Archives II, NARA, DC.
progress of the nation," said Runte. Thus the need to develop natural resources drove much public policy well into the twentieth century. For that reason, said Runte, "only the high, rugged, spectacular landforms of the West" were considered for inclusion in the NPS system, and "inevitably park boundaries conformed to economic rather than ecological dictates."^36

Because this strategy relied upon the grandeur of nature to convince private landowners, resource companies, and their legislators to concede private property to the park service, Runte labeled this process "monumentalism." Future parks would be measured against the beauty and scale of such units as Yellowstone in Wyoming, Grand Canyon in Arizona, and Yosemite in California. Early twentieth century efforts at conservation of natural resources (part of the Progressive era’s quest for "efficiency and economy" in government and business) required places like the Davis Mountains to demonstrate how parks "could pay dividends to the national purse," instead of merely relying upon aesthetic appeal or romantic charm. One way that smaller parks could be created after World War I was what Runte called the "embrace of the automobile," linked to the "See America First" campaign conducted during the war to encourage wealthy travelers to avoid the dangers of ocean crossing to Europe, and also to spend their money at home.^37

The Davis Mountain park plan of the 1920s did try to follow the pattern of "monumentalism," which by necessity ignored an historical resource like old Fort Davis. What is interesting about the local boosters' strategy is their awareness of the sentiments in Congress and the state legislature for park programs linked to economic development. The failure of Hudspeth's park bill would not daunt the Fort Davis merchants, who instead regrouped in 1926 to press the Texas Highway Department to build the "Davis Mountains State Parks Highway." Known locally as the "Scenic Loop," the route would meander some 74 miles west of Fort Davis through the lands of ranchers, permitting them better access to the railroads and markets away from west Texas. The idea took shape in September 1926, when a group of merchants, bankers, and ranchers met in the back room of the Fort Davis State Bank, across the street from the county courthouse. Among the attendees was a summer visitor, State Senator Thomas Love of Dallas, who declared his willingness to sponsor a bill in the legislature to create the highway. This would also generate jobs in the construction trades in the Davis Mountains, as well as monies to purchase ranch lands from private owners.^38

Part of the impetus in 1926 for the Scenic Loop also came from the outside, as in the words of Jacobsen and Nored, a "slightly eccentric prosperous North Texas banker," William Johnson McDonald, donated upon his death that year over $1 million


^37Ibid., 81, 106, 156.

Figure 5. Visitor at Sleeping Lion Overlook. Note good condition of recently abandoned structures (1890s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
to the University of Texas to build an astronomical observatory in his name. The university lacked the expertise to design and construct such a facility, and thus contacted the University of Chicago for advice. Its professors suggested the mountains of far West Texas for their clear air, open space, dry climate, and most importantly their lack of city lights to obscure night vision. A loop road out to the potential observatory site sixteen miles northwest of Fort Davis would enhance the attractiveness of the location to the University of Texas, and would also appeal to state legislators concerned about the economic viability of the route.\(^{39}\)

As Senator Love's proposal wended its way through the Texas statehouse, local interests cast about for additional evidence of the value of the Scenic Loop. In 1927, the West Texas Historical Association called for preservation of old Fort Davis, but this did not appear in the legislation signed that year by Governor Dan L. Moody to build the highway. Then in 1929 Representative Hudspeth reintroduced in Congress his Davis Mountains national park bill, which again did not include the fort, and which also failed of passage. Resistance to these plans bothered the local interests, as they knew of efforts in Texas and nationwide to accelerate the process of park creation. Michael Kammen noted that in 1927, the state of Virginia, no doubt responding to the plans of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to restore Colonial Williamsburg, "undertook the first large-scale attempt to identify historic sites for motorists." This concept of expanding parks beyond natural beauty to human history found a receptive audience in Austin, and the state legislature followed Virginia's lead in erecting roadside historical markers.\(^{40}\)

Three events in the late 1920s and early 1930s shifted the focus among local interests from the Davis Mountains to the preservation in town of old Fort Davis. First, the onset of the Depression slowed the pace of state highway construction, exacerbating a condition that the locals may not have realized: the opposition of the highway department to the whole idea of the Scenic Loop. Gene Hendryx, owner after World War II of the only radio station in the area (KVLF in Alpine), and also a state representative for the Davis Mountains in the 1960s, learned when he promoted expansion of the Davis Mountains state park that highway planners had not been consulted on the feasibility of the route, nor had local ranchers been satisfactorily compensated for their lands. In addition, said Jacobsen and Nored, "so many other more heavily traveled routes were begging for improvement." It seems that the local promoters of the road used their political clout in Austin to gain passage and the governor's signature. For that reason the route would take years to complete, with its dedication not held until 1947; 21 years after Barry Scobee wrote a news story about attending the meeting with Senator Love in the Fort Davis State Bank to commence the road project.\(^{41}\)

\(^{39}\)Jacobsen and Nored, *Jeff Davis County*, 280.


\(^{41}\)Jacobsen and Nored, *Jeff Davis County*, 261; Interview with Gene Hendryx, Alpine, TX, January 5, 1995.
Just as the Scenic Loop showed promise, a Hollywood western film star named Jack Hoxie came to Fort Davis with a plan to make the post nationally famous. William K. Everson described Hoxie in *A Pictorial History of the Western Film* (1969) as "a player of restricted talent and variable pictures," whose "huge popularity must be attributed to the fact that he made more good pictures than bad ones and that when they were good, they were very good." Historians of western film consider the 1920s as the "golden age" of the genre, in that this was the period of rapid expansion of the technology for feature films, and the growth of urban audiences who were neither discriminating in their tastes nor knowledgeable of the accuracy of the story lines. Hoxie, who began his career under the name "Hart" Hoxie (perhaps to link himself to the most prominent western silent film actor, William S. Hart), "was a big, amiable oaf, whose large frame made him seem clumsy afoot and whose expression suggested that his mind was a complete blank." His great gift, however, was his horsemanship, and Everson described Hoxie as "something else again, an expert rider and stunter." Most noted for the film, *Don Quickshot of the Rio Grande*, Hoxie impressed audiences nationwide with his "elaborate stunts, leaps, transfers from galloping horse to moving train," while the picture itself benefitted from a series of "majestic exteriors."42

When not making movies in the 1920s, Hoxie found employment in Oklahoma on the Miller Brothers "101 Ranch," made famous as a touring Wild West show and working ranch because of its promotion of the era’s premier cowboy star, Tom Mix. Hoxie followed in Mix’s tradition of athletic ability and presence on a horse, and the owners of the 101 Ranch hoped to find a site for Hoxie to highlight his skills (and also downplay his limitations). This they believed would be in the Davis Mountains, and thus Hoxie was introduced in the spring of 1929 to W.A. Wilson, secretary of the Marfa chamber of commerce. Wilson took Hoxie on a tour of the area, and the *Alpine Avalanche* reported that the movie star had "'fallen hard' for this environment." Hoxie and his entourage then drafted plans for a $250,000 resort and movie set to be housed at the fort, including "a half-mile race track, a polo field, golf course, baseball diamond, a big swimming pool and a rodeo arena." The entire square mile comprising the John James estate’s lands would be surrounded by a 55-inch wire fence, and a spokesman told the Alpine paper: "In repairing the old adobe structures and corrals the old outlines will be strictly preserved."43

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For the next two years, the Hoxie company entranced Fort Davis and environs as only Hollywood can do. In May 1930, J.E. Pierce, president of the New York-based "Pacific Far West Pictures Corporation," came to "Hoxie's Stockade," as the post had become known, to discuss "the possibilities of old Fort Davis as a tourist resort and a place to make 'western' pictures." Speaking for Hoxie was W.A. Wilson, who had convinced three Fort Davis men (Lee Glasscock, Frank Jones, and Herbert Bloys) to sign a 25-year lease with the James family to use the fort. The lessees agreed to give the James estate $300 upon signing, another $300 after one year, $800 within two years, and $1,200 per year for the remainder of the agreement. In addition to this payment of $2,600, Messrs. Glasscock, Jones and Bloys would pay taxes and assessment fees on the property. Soon thereafter the three men received from Frank L. Sproul a 20-year lease on farm land north of the fort along Limpia Creek for an additional $7,000. They then subleased a portion of these properties to Hoxie and Wilson.\(^4\)

Unfortunately for the local investors, the Hoxie company never could develop the property as advertised. The only major event staged at the post was a rodeo in March 1930, witnessed by over 2,000 people on a windy, blustery Sunday. The highlight of the day was Hoxie performing tricks on his famous white horse, Scout, and with his "trained dog Bunk." Hoxie's "leading lady," Miss Dixie Starr, also pleased the crowd.

with her performance "in a little melodrama wherein the Bunk came to the rescue," and with her "work with the rifle." Visitors sought more news of completion of the project, and one Sunday in March 1930 some 450 automobiles drove through the old fort grounds. One interesting note from the construction work in rehabilitating the ruins came when carpenters found along Officers' Row stone arrowheads embedded in the roofs, leading Barry Scobee to report in the *Alpine Avalanche*: "Indians used to lie in the rocks above the old fort and shoot arrows down at the soldiers according to local history and evidently there is something to it."45

Whether or not there was "something" to the local lore about Indian attacks on the post, the Depression and Hoxie's fading appeal did harm to the town's dream of Hollywood glitter and fame. Jacobsen and Nored (the latter a relative of investor Herbert Bloys) wrote years later that "by spring of 1931, Hoxie's financial backers were in serious trouble themselves from the drop in oil prices." The cowboy star, in the authors' words, "conned numerous Fort Davis citizens into investing $100 [each] in his enterprise," and none "received a penny of their money back." Jacobsen and Nored then recounted local folklore about Hoxie's shortcomings as an actor; features blissfully ignored when the company was in town. Film historians echoed their criticism, albeit more tactfully. "Hoxie could neither read nor write," said Everson, "and genially accepted some rather cruel inside jokes about those failings in several of his films." The advent of sound pictures by the early 1930s rendered Hoxie useless in Hollywood, as he could not "read, remember, or deliver a line." He thus "drifted out of the movies" as quickly as he had hit Fort Davis with his dream of Hollywood on the Limpia.46

With the town of Fort Davis sadder but wiser as a result of the Hoxie affair, civic officials faced the third factor of change in their efforts to promote the Davis Mountains. Where highways and movies had failed, they hoped to take advantage of a new direction in the state and federal government towards parks and history. The administration of Herbert Hoover (1929-1933), noted in history books for its disastrous management of the nation's economy during the Great Depression, nonetheless seemed favorable to expansion of the nation's system of parks and monuments. Hoover and his Interior secretary, Ray Lyman Wilbur, applied liberally the Antiquities Act of 1906, which permitted the executive branch to set aside "man-made wonders or scientific curiosities" for preservation. Vance Prather of Fort Thomas, Kentucky, had written in March 1930 to Horace M. Albright, director of the NPS, about the need for a national park in west Texas. Among his suggestions were the future Guadalupe Mountain National Park near Carlsbad Caverns, Palo Duro Canyon near Amarillo, and "the Davis Mountain area, a mile high, near Fort Davis, an enchanting vista." What made this area appealing, said Prather, was "its vast road system, its easy access by way of the Bankhead, Old Spanish

45Many See Rodeo At Fort Davis," *Alpine Avalanche*, March 28, 1930; "Jack Hoxie Rebuilding Old Fort; Ready Early," *Big Bend Sentinel* (Marfa, TX), March 6, 1930; Scobee, "Proof of History," *Alpine Avalanche*, September 18, 1931.

46Jacobsen and Nored, *Jeff Davis County*, 256-57; Everson, *Western Film*, 83.
Figure 7. Abandoned Fort Davis looking north from Sleeping Lion Mountain (early 1900s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
The defeat of Hoover in the 1932 presidential election did not daunt the boosters of Fort Davis, in that the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt promised even more aggressive action on behalf of the park service. "Whereas Hoover's ventures into history were non-political and bland," said Michael Kammen, "FDR's uses of the past were shrewd and self-serving." The desperate times facing the American people led Roosevelt to experiment with all manner of "New Deal" social and economic programs; what Kammen called FDR's "distinctive capacity to connect innovation with tradition." The 1930s also witnessed a breakdown of resistance to public support of historical institutions. "Had there not been a Great Depression," said Kammen, "it might have taken considerably longer for government at any level to concern itself with American history, myths, and museums." Roosevelt knew that "American society increasingly needed and sought a meaningful sense of its heritage in crisis times," and "since Americans disagreed about numerous policy issues during the 1930s, history seemed a kind of neutral ground."48

The New Deal could come none too soon for boosters of Fort Davis or the Davis Mountains as national parks. On the last day of the Hoover administration (January 19, 1933), Horace Albright signed a recommendation drafted by Conrad Wirth of the Washington NPS office (abbreviated as WASO) to remove the Davis Mountains area from further consideration. Wirth wrote that the Texas state parks board had recently acquired 3,500 acres of land in the mountains along the route for the Scenic Loop. "The road is now being constructed," Wirth told Albright, "and the area is practically established as a State Park." A new presidential administration inspired local interests to resubmit their request, and the park service sent to the Davis Mountains the former superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park, Roger V. Toll, who had become an expert in surveying the potential of new park sites. Toll visited the Davis Mountains in the spring of 1934, and praised the area for its "rolling hills . . . excellent grazing grass . . . [and] numerous outcrops of granite." Unfortunately, the Davis Mountains did not compare to scenery such as Toll had managed in Colorado, and he concluded that the area had "pastoral beauty, but it is not spectacular." Toll suggested instead: "The area is more suitable for a state park than for a national reservation, and it is recommended that it be dropped from the list of proposed projects, but that cooperation with the State Parks Board be continued."49

That "cooperation" of which Wirth (a future NPS director) spoke came in the form of park service-supervised construction work at the Davis Mountains State Park,

47Runte, National Parks, 73.

48Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 450-51, 458, 460, 462.

three miles northwest of Fort Davis on the road to the proposed site of the McDonald Observatory. Through a combination of state purchase and leasing of private lands, 2,130 acres of the Davis Mountains were targeted for a resort complex. Its salient feature was "the magnificent mountain setting," said a park service press release in August 1937, "which particularly is attractive to Texans, due to the fact that during July and August it is cool and green, while most of the state is hot and dry." The release said nothing about the ability of the mass of Texans in urban and rural areas to the east to gain access to a publicly funded resort, whose "most outstanding structure is the adobe Indian Lodge, which is an impressive Pueblo style, with sixteen guest rooms each with private baths." The lodge was "furnished throughout with Indian motif furniture made from native woods by the Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC]," and it came complete with "a spacious lobby with dance floor." The Scenic Loop and "several miles of foot and horse trails [made] the mountain scenery more accessible."^50

While students of the post-New Deal era might note the irony of social welfare agencies like the CCC building such a luxurious facility, the NPS found itself besieged by local interests to hurry the construction and add more touches that would make the resort even more appealing. The CCC is better known to historians as one of the most popular of federal agencies created in the heady "First One Hundred Days" of the Roosevelt administration (March-June 1933). As its goal, the CCC sought the removal of young single males from the streets of America’s urban centers, where idleness and lack of employment bred social problems and violence. Its 600 camps were located in rural and wilderness areas of the country, where they were managed by officers of the U.S. Army. CCC enrollees earned $30 per month, which included $10 to be placed in savings, $10 sent home to help with family expenses, $5 per month for room and board, and $5 for spending money. Youth learned discipline, work habits, and job skills in the camps, while the Army provided schooling in trades and mechanics. The NPS in turn offered planning and design capabilities for structures in nature; hence the park service’s entry in the 1930s into the Davis Mountains.

As the CCC work unfolded in west Texas, the NPS learned lessons about the political and economic power of the Jeff Davis County elite. One dimension that Jacobsen and Nored recounted was the eagerness of Hispanic youth to seek work on the Scenic Loop crews and at the CCC camp. They especially appreciated the higher wage scales (the NPS paid the national minimum wage of 25 cents per hour), the job training in construction, carpentry, and mechanics, and the opportunity to learn the English language; all skills that might lead to a better standard of living than currently available on local ranches. Less appealing to the park service were the expectations of the locals for inclusion of "extras" like a man-made lake. Harry L. Dunham, district inspector for the ECW (Emergency Conservation Work) program, which included the CCC, wrote to Herbert Maier in the Denver offices of the NPS in February 1934: "There has been an insistent demand by the natives of the Fort Davis District that they be provided with a

^50Press Release, "Davis Mountains State Park, Texas," August 1937, RG79, NPS, Davis Mountains SP-4 Texas Files, Rocky Mountain Region, National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, CO (cited as DEN NARA).
They claimed that the state and federal officials who negotiated the agreement to build the Davis Mountains state park had included such a lake, and "they expressed a great deal of disappointment that this promise has not been fulfilled, although they donated land for the park on the strength of this promise." Dunham agreed that construction of a dam at the Indian Lodge "will add greatly to the value of the property," as it was "very fine game country." But the lack of proximity to clay deposits would require construction of "either a masonry or a concrete dam; either one of which will be extremely expensive in time and material." Yet he believed the NPS should promote such an expenditure, given that the Davis Mountains "could very easily be one of the out-standing Texas Parks, ranking closely with Palo Duro and Bastrop, and probably next to the Chisos Mountains [the future Big Bend National Park]."

Maier agreed with Dunham's analysis of the potential of the Davis Mountains, and wrote to Conrad Wirth, now director of the NPS "Office of Buildings and Reservations," that "this is without question one of our best state projects in Texas." The Colorado official wanted not only to start the Indian Lodge dam at once, but to experiment with a "two or three shift" schedule to improve employee performance. "It is much better for the morale of the men if the work and the camp is humming," said Maier, "and when especially they can see themselves getting someplace, than is the case where these large projects are forced to move along so slowly." The Washington office, however, did not add CCC monies to Davis Mountain for a dam, and thus Maier and R.O. Whiteaker, chief engineer of the NPS State Park Division in Austin, had to reassess the work schedule for the site. Whiteaker suggested that in order to keep the camp occupied, "it is desired to construct one look-out house on top of a high mountain, reached by trails already constructed and over-looking the town of Fort Davis, Keesey Canyon and the Indian Village," the future connecting trail between the park service site in town and the state park. To compensate for the lack of a large dam, Whiteaker called instead for two small dams in front of the Indian Lodge. The total cost of this expanded work would be $2,360.00, which could employ the crew for 1,400 "man-months" (the amount of time per worker needed to complete the job).

The expectations of the locals were met and exceeded by the demands of Texas state officials, who taught the park service lessons about regional politics that would affect later decisions about the inclusion of Fort Davis in the park system. D.E. Colp, chairman of the state parks board, wondered why the NPS would need 12 months of money for a dam at Indian Lodge, when the state believed that it could do so in 30 to 60 days. "I think there should be 25 or 30 dams built in the Big Bend project," said Colp, and he rejected the idea that it was Texas' fault for the design problems. Colp pleaded with Maier to push for more money so that Texas had "an opportunity to

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51 Jacobsen and Nored, Jeff Davis County, 274-75; Harry L. Dunham, District Inspector, ECW (Emergency Conservation Works), Austin, TX, to Herbert Maier, NPS, Denver, February 12, 1934, RG79, NPS, Davis Mountains SP-4 Texas Files, DEN NARA.

52 Maier to Wirth, February 18, 1934; R.O. Whiteaker, Chief Engineer, NPS State Park Division, Austin, TX, September 28, 1934, RG79, NPS, Davis Mountains SP-4 Texas Files, DEN NARA.
demonstrate to you and the NPS that a large dam can be built at a reasonable cost and reasonable time." George Nason, district inspector for the Oklahoma City-based NPS State Parks Division, disagreed, telling Herbert Maier (now also in Oklahoma City) that "the Lodge at Fort Davis was a larger project than should have been attempted." Nason claimed that "it was started under the control of the Texas Relief Commission at time when the approval of a [park service] District Officer was not required to start a building." Nason suggested that the NPS agree to continue the Indian Lodge camp for another 90-day period, and learn from the fact that "this is simply one of the holdovers from the super-ambitions of the first period of CCC."[53]

The more that Herbert Maier contemplated the costs of completing the work at Indian Lodge, the more he wished to be rid of the task. Writing on January 31, 1935, to his superiors in the ECW office in Washington, the regional office director defined the park as "another case of unreliable estimates in Texas." The Texas state parks board seemed to have "[i]nspectors [who] are not trained as building contractors," while materials purchases were billed to the wrong accounts. The NPS thus had no funds to complete the light plant, painting of the stucco and interior plastered walls, and the "painting or staining [of] all interior and exterior wood work." The extensive flagstone terracing also would have to come from a quarry 17 miles away. "We are exceedingly anxious to get finished at Fort Davis and get out," Maier reported, and concluded: "We certainly know now what is beyond our scope and of course this sort of thing cannot occur in the future under the new method of submitting individual projects."[54]

New accountability procedures notwithstanding, the park service had to salvage what it could at the Indian Lodge before the removal of the CCC camp in the spring of 1935. George Nason decided to convert the garage at the site into an employees' dormitory, which Herbert Maier agreed was necessary, saying: "It most certainly spoils the general appearance of a park to have trucks and old cars standing around with no place to house them." Despite the presence of two hundred laborers, the NPS had not been able to complete a road around the lodge, and the flagstone would have to be laid by "a transient camp or some sort of an FERA [Federal Emergency Relief Administration] project at this point." Nason agreed, and tried at first to put a positive spin on the closure of the camp. "I feel quite confident," he told Maier on February 13, 1935, "that while you may find some error in detail in the solution of the Indian Lodge problem, yet when completed, it is going to be one of the most effective things we have done in a structure so far in Texas." Unfortunately, Nason did not maintain this optimism as the date for camp removal arrived, reporting to Maier on March 23: "I am

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[53] D.E. Colp, Chairman, Texas State Parks Board, to Maier, November 16, 1934; George Nason, District Inspector, NPS State Park Division, Oklahoma City, OK, to Maier, January 5, 1935, RG79, NPS, Davis Mountains SP-4 Texas Files, DEN NARA.

[54] Maier to State Park ECW, NPS, Washington, DC, January 31, 1935, RG79, NPS, Davis Mountains SP-4 Texas Files, DEN NARA.
writing this letter so that you might be relieved to know that this white elephant is practically ready for burial."\(^{55}\)

Closure of the Davis Mountains CCC camp that spring did not relieve the NPS of the burden of completing Indian Lodge to the satisfaction of Texas officials or local interests. Because he did not receive a promised water supply for his grazing stock, lessor J.W. Merrill asked instead to be given a windmill installed at NPS expense on his property. When the state took control of the lodge in the summer of 1935, they petitioned the park service for both a lighting plant and furniture. The Texas park board claimed that it had "only $5,000 with which to buy equipment and furniture for all of its [60] projects in Texas and they have spent quite a bit of this in setting up a plant, and hiring a furniture maker to turn out craftsman furniture." The roof was also deficient, and the lack of fireplaces irritated visitors who equated them with a mountain experience. Then in 1937 John H. Veale, associate engineer for the newly established "Region III" of the park service in Santa Fe (the future Southwest Regional office, or SWR), discovered on a visit to the Indian Lodge that its sewage disposal system was "in serious need of revision," while the water supply "should be investigated and perhaps revised."\(^{56}\)

Despite these crises, the park service made a calculated decision to replace the CCC crew at Indian Lodge with one completing its tasks in the Big Bend area. There local boosters had waged a similar campaign to have the NPS include the spectacular canyons of the Rio Grande into its system. The crew also came to the Davis Mountains because NPS officials admitted privately that they had larger plans for the region that required them to cooperate with powerful Texas politicians, such as House Speaker John Nance Garner and U.S. Senator Tom Connally. Herbert Maier told George Nason in February 1935: "I have felt that we could justify the Indian Lodge at Ft. Davis on the basis of the fact that we are considering the whole Ft. Davis area as you yourself have stated as a vacation land." By continuing the work at the lodge, said Maier, "we should regard the whole thing as a chain of parks with the Indian Lodge handy and near the entrance to the mountains and the scenic drives from there going on into the several other parks that might later on be established in the Davis Mountains." Maier had seen a map depicting the Scenic Loop highway, "and it occurred to me that some sort of a map of this kind showing how the Indian Lodge will serve an immense area later on will be a

\(^{55}\)Maier to Nason, February 8, 1935; Nason to Maier, February 13, March 23, 1935, RG79, NPS, Davis Mountains SP-4 Texas Files, DEN NARA.

\(^{56}\)Telegram of Nason to Texas State Park ECW, Austin, June 12, 1935; Maier to A.H. Good, NPS State Park ECW, September 20, 1935; William J. Lawson, Executive Secretary, Texas State Parks Board, to NPS, March 23, 1937; John H. Veale, Associate Engineer, NPS Region III, Santa Fe, NM, "Reconnaissance Report on Sewage Disposal System at Indian Village Davis Mountains, Texas," November 1937, RG79, NPS, Davis Mountains SP-4 Texas Files, DEN NARA. The SWR became in May 1995 the Southwest System Support Office (SWSSO).
good thing for us to have at hand in case it became necessary for us to justify our efforts in the past." 57

The NPS evidently had informed Texas officials of this long-term goal of controlling the Davis Mountains recreational sites, because in August 1937 Don Adams, president of the Brewster County chamber of commerce, wrote to El Paso congressman R.E. Thomason to support transfer of the Big Bend CCC camp to Indian Lodge. While the Alpine-based chamber had been a staunch promoter of a national park 110 miles south at Big Bend, it had learned that "it is the desire of both the National Park Service and the Texas State Parks Board to move the CCC camp." Park service personnel had told Adams that the NPS "anticipates that the region will eventually come under its jurisdiction, and is not anxious that further work would be continued under the supervision of the State." The Alpine chamber had opposed the camp transfer, but now was aware that the state board, "realizing that this area is to be made into a national park, prefers to expend monies on State Parks." Adams told Thomason: "We believe, and think that you will agree with us, that the Fort Davis State Park is one of the most potential areas that the State Parks Board has, and that it should be developed." Hence the chamber asked the west Texas representative to support the transfer "with the least possible delay." 58

Alpine’s change of heart about federal control of Davis Mountain land demonstrated the shift of emphasis inspired by the New Deal. The state of Texas decided to join the national consensus about historic celebrations, which had begun in 1931 with the "sesquicentennial" (150th anniversary) of the British Army's surrender to American forces at Yorktown, Virginia. The success of this exercise led other states to promote historic events, whether national or local, with increasing fervor. Texas joined the party in 1934 with plans to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Texas Revolution, which had led in 1836 to formation of the Lone Star Republic. In comparing the Texas experience at historical celebrations to its peers nationwide, Michael Kammen noted that the state developed "a candid dual theme of 'patriotism and commercialism,'" according to minutes of the centennial commission meetings. Enduring evidence of the Texas commemoration in 1936 ranged from staging of a college football bowl game in Dallas on New Year's Day (the Cotton Bowl), to the identification of historic sites and construction of roadside markers to highlight the Texas story for travelers and natives alike. 59

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57Lawson to Region III Director, Oklahoma City, August 27, 1937; Maier to Nason, February 8, 1935, RG79, NPS, Davis Mountains SP-4 Texas Files, DEN NARA; Arthur R. Gomez, A Most Singular Country: A History of Occupation in the Big Bend (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, 1990), 176-77.

58Don Adams, President, Brewster County Chamber of Commerce, Alpine, TX, to U.S. Representative R.E. Thomason, Washington, DC, August 20, 1937, RG79, NPS, Davis Mountains SP-4 Texas Files, DEN NARA.

59Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 395.
By 1935, both Texas and the National Park Service had embraced history as a worthy theme for expenditure of public money and time. T.E. Fehrenbach wrote of the balancing act that Texas leaders attempted in the Thirties to bring to the state federal funds that could rescue the economy from the Depression, while keeping the hated "Yankees" at bay, especially their rules and regulations formed in a more urban, industrial society. "With the coming of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal," said Fehrenbach, "Texas was able to transfer approximately 70 percent of its social costs to the Federal government." Because of its sizeable voting bloc in Congress, and its southern Democratic tendencies, Texas sent to Washington politicians who "secured to their state, in various ways, money far exceeding its population's proportionate share [27 percent above the national average]." At the same time, the Lone Star state "could not resist longing for the Yankees to let the natives in the hinterlands run things for themselves, whether the Great White Father liked the way they were run or not." This would extend to the park service as it completed work on the Davis Mountains State Park, and cast about for other areas that could be developed at public expense.\(^{60}\)

This public-private enterprise in far west Texas echoed policy changes in Washington, as in 1935 Congress enacted the "Historic Sites Act." Coupled with the Historic American Buildings Survey (1933), these actions, in Kammen's words, "explicitly confirmed that a central role for the Park Service in historic preservation should be fostered by the federal government." The Historic Sites Act also created an advisory board to screen proposals for park locations. Unfortunately for the NPS, the great volume of requests for survey work forced the agency, said Kammen, "to establish nominating procedures that . . . may have stifled proposals from regional, minority, and relatively uninfluential groups that found it hard to fulfill lofty criteria for 'national significance.'"\(^{61}\)

Proof of this phenomenon came to the west Texas area quickly in 1935, as H.E. Rothrock, geologic supervisor for the state park division of WASO, wrote to the Oklahoma City office to promote study of a site he had visited while traveling through the Davis Mountains and Big Bend country. Rothrock had come upon the ruins of one of Fort Davis' outposts, Camp Pena Colorado, located six miles southwest of the railroad town of Marathon. "The area appears to be worth preserving," said Rothrock, "because it is said to have constituted an important link in the Indian trails across the country and was later used as an Indian outpost fort." The geologist recognized "the presence of large, cool, sweet water springs which issue from the base of a commanding cliff and are located in [an] otherwise desert country . . . [that] is the last place on the road . . . to Terlingua . . . at which shade or water can be obtained throughout the year." Rothrock saw the presence of humans and cattle, but could not determine land ownership. He then closed his letter to the Oklahoma office with reasoning that had been missing from earlier studies of Fort Davis and the area: "Due to the unique character of [Camp Pena Colorado], the variety of interests represented and its relation to the Big Bend

\(^{60}\)Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, 651-52, 715.

reservation, I thought that you might be interested in considering this area for development and preservation."  

Rothrock's letter outlined the latest problem for boosters of Fort Davis as a tourist attraction. The NPS geologist had come to the area not to study military posts, but to respond to congressional passage in 1935 of a bill creating Big Bend National Park. Arthur R. Gomez wrote of the elaborate (and successful) campaign waged in Texas and Washington on behalf of the Rio Grande site in his book, *A Most Singular Country: A History of Occupation in the Big Bend* (1990). Like Fort Davis, patients recuperating from Texas' malarial conditions in the early twentieth century came to the Boquillas Hot Springs. And like Fort Davis, said Gomez, "community boosters viewed the [NPS] legislation as an opportunity to stimulate a stagnating regional economy through the promotion of tourism." Unlike the Davis Mountains, however, the climate was harsher and grazing in the arid Chisos range more risky. The large ranchers owed back taxes on much of their property, and the park service believed that this would soften resistance to land sales. Roger Toll paid the Big Bend country a visit like he did the Davis Mountains, and in the words of Gomez: "The aesthetic and sometimes mysterious quality of the heralded geologic attractions of the region deeply impressed [the park service surveyor]."

Big Bend attracted the attention of the park service and Congress where Fort Davis did not because of the prominent opinion-makers who stood strongly for its inclusion in the NPS system. The Alpine chamber of commerce created a separate group to promote the park at all levels of government. One stroke of public-relations genius was their hiring as a consultant Walter Prescott Webb, the dean of Texas historians. The University of Texas history professor took a highly visible raft trip in 1937 down the Rio Grande through the Big Bend, writing about the wonders of Boquillas Canyon, the romance of the Mexican border, and of the need for public investment to preserve these unique resources. The president of Sul Ross State College in Alpine also approached Amon Carter, publisher of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, for his assistance in both publicity and fundraising. Carter helped create the "Texas Big Bend Park Association," and sold his readers on "the advantages of a tourist industry to the Lone Star State." The Fort Worth publisher also leveraged his power with political leaders, and when Texas Governor W. Lee "Pappy" O'Daniel received correspondence from FDR asking his support for Big Bend, the governor and Texas legislature agreed to a $1 million appropriation to purchase the land that became in 1944 Texas' first national park.

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62H.E. Rothrock, Geologic Supervisor, NPS State Park Division, Washington, DC, to "Seventh Regional Officer," NPS, Oklahoma City, June 29, 1935, RG79, NPS, O-35 Fort Pena Colorado General Texas File, Box 15, DEN NARA.


64Ibid., 184-85, 187-88.
Fort Davis boosters knew of these efforts on behalf of Big Bend through their business connections in Alpine, and the conversations they had in 1935 with both state and federal officials swarming over the Davis Mountains. While they expressed no jealousy in public over the success of the Brewster County park, nonetheless their commitment to the old military post faced challenges of competition for federal money. To that end Barry Scobee and his friends in Fort Davis asked the Texas Centennial Commission to build several highway markers in the area. In November 1935, the historical board of the commission agreed to allocate to Jeff Davis County four such markers: one at Wild Rose Pass, one at the adobe ruins of the Manuel Musquiz ranch, one at the ruins of the fort, and one at the "gravesite" of "Indian Emily." It was the latter story that Scobee used effectively to promote the romance and glamour of life at Fort Davis, in the process publicizing a story that would haunt the park service a generation later when it came to the Davis Mountains to conduct its own historical research.\(^{65}\)

It is ironic that the Indian Emily story would garner more notoriety than any other feature of Fort Davis' history prior to creation of the park. What gripped the imagination of the Texas Centennial Commission was a sentimental piece written by Scobee in the May 31, 1935 issue of the *Alpine Avalanche*. Scobee, who had learned of the local legend of Indian Emily from area ranchers while assisting Carl Raht with his book, entitled the article: "Indian Squaw Who Betrayed Her People And Gave Her Life Out Of Love For Young Officer Is Paid Honor By Fort Davis Citizens On Memorial Day." Scobee recounted the tale of the young "Apache maid" whom soldiers had brought to the post after defeating her people in a skirmish in nearby Limpia Canyon. Nursed back to health by the mother of a young officer, Emily (so the story went) developed an infatuation with Lieutenant Thomas Easton, only to be heartbroken when he chose to wed an Anglo woman. She fled the fort, found her people, whom Scobee described as "the fierce and warring Apaches," only to return one night to warn the fort of an impending attack. A sentry fired into the darkness upon her arrival, and she died in the arms of Mrs. Easton saying (in Scobee's words): "My people - they come - kill, they must not kill TOM!"\(^{66}\)

This story fit well with the nation's understanding in the 1930s of the "noble savage," as Indians were depicted in film, literature, and song. The story echoes what one scholar of Indian history, Rayna Green (herself of Indian descent), called the "Pocahontas Perplex;" a reference to the story of the young Indian girl who pleaded with her father, Powhatan, to spare the life of Captain John Smith, and by extension the Jamestown colony of 1607. Scobee, needing evidence of the Indian Emily story for the commission's marker program, asked old timers about the location of her grave, walked the grounds of the fort, and fashioned a tale of lost love and tragedy that transcended the bounds of race and gender, if not memory. Unfortunately, this did not convince the

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\(^{65}\)"Historic Markers To Be Erected In Jeff Davis County," *Alpine Avalanche*, November 29, 1935.

commission to purchase the fort as part of its centennial program. Supposedly the James estate of San Antonio, still owning the fort grounds, asked too much money for its sale. In October 1935, the commission decided to submit the Fort Davis proposal to the newly created "Federal Centennial Commission," which had received funding from Congress to expand the work of the state historical board. At that time the state commission agreed to spend $25,000 for a "Historical and Scientific Society Museum" in Alpine, one more reminder to Scobee and his associates of the awkward status of Fort Davis in the minds of historical agencies. Yet another blow came in January 1936, when the federal commission ruled that it could not spend money on "permanent structures." News stories in the town did not mention the supposed opposition to the post by John Nance Garner, Vice-President of the United States and a longtime Texas congressman. Nor did they comment on the locals' decision to promote the park as "a memorial to Jefferson Davis," whose name evoked different responses in west Texas and Washington, DC. Even the entreaties of J. Frank Dobie, a member of the historical board, went unheeded as he pleaded for use of leftover monies in the commission budget to purchase Fort Davis.67

In competition with the Scobee promotion of park status for the old military post, local residents in 1936 eyed the remaining 80 acres unsold during the 1910 auction of the abandoned lands. The Fort Davis Dispatch reported on August 20: "Property in that vicinity [east of the post] is increasing in value. Homes are springing up and farms are being established." Upon review of the parcels by the Interior department, the GLO agreed to return to Fort Davis on April 10, 1937 to solicit bids for the remaining eight lots. The acreage had been considered "public domain" by locals for years, and had been forgotten by federal officials. In the mid-1930s, a Texas state surveyor, R.C. Withers, discovered in the land records the federal ownership and encouraged local residents to petition the government for its sale. H.L. Wilcox, special agent of the Interior department, came down to Fort Davis from the regional office in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to conduct the sale. Writing to the GLO "Director of Investigations" in Washington, in a report stamped "Confidential Not For Public Inspection," Wilcox declared that he appraised the lots at a total of $720, and received of the bidders $785, for a profit of $65 on their sale. Among the successful parties were Miss Mary Sproul, Mac Sproul, W.O. Meeks, and C.G. Carmack of Fort Davis, and C.W. Copeland of Alpine.68


On his visit to Fort Davis, agent Wilcox impressed the locals with his geniality and efficient manner. What impressed Wilcox, however, was the region’s untapped potential. "As yet," he wrote to his Washington superiors, "Ft. Davis has the air of a primitive western town of pioneer days." Yet he predicted "great future possibilities because of its location - junction of two Highways running north and south now partially completed, ideal year around climate, scenery, and proximity to the McDonald Observatory," which he noted would become "the third largest Observatory in the world." Not knowing the history of public and private efforts to develop the area, Wilcox believed that "it would seem that nothing but time and good advertising will make this beautiful spot one of the southwest playgrounds, and especially for the State of Texas." Then turning to the town of Fort Davis itself, Wilcox noted that "there is an abundance of lots for sale . . . and bordering on the east, south and north is an abundance of acreage of the same character [as the post lands], and as accessible to town as the lots sold." Given this condition of supply exceeding demand, the special agent concluded: "I feel that the sale of the lots for $65.00 in excess of the appraised amount was very good, and especially so in view of the fact that the only present value of the land rests in its value for pasture or dry farming."69

In light of these transactions, and because of the unsolicited comments of people like H.L. Wilcox, Barry Scobee persisted throughout 1937 in soliciting someone's interest in Fort Davis. The Texas Editorial Association held its winter 1936 meeting in Alpine, where Marvin Hunter, publisher of the *Fort Davis Dispatch*, joined Scobee in appealing for their support of a park at the abandoned post. The *Alpine Avalanche*, which carried Barry Scobee’s articles, joined in the chorus for its neighbor, and reported in December 1936 that nearly one dozen Texas papers had written in favor of a Fort Davis park since the editors’ gathering. Scobee, for his part, wrote and published that year a 40-page booklet entitled, *The Story of Fort Davis and Jeff Davis County*, printed and distributed by the *Fort Davis Dispatch*. Its owner then conceived of a plan in September 1937 to include the fort in the million-dollar fundraising campaign for Big Bend. "Why not raise another $35,000?" asked Marvin Hunter; a sum that "would buy the land occupied by the famous old frontier military post and go far toward its restoration." Hunter all but admitted that local interests had failed in their preservation efforts, and pleaded: "A comparatively small amount of money would be required now to save something that in a few more years, if not taken care of, will be only a collection of adobe bricks and a few bits of stone trimming piled about in shapeless confusion."70

Hunter, Scobee, and the *Alpine Avalanche* failed to secure NPS support on their own, but their campaign to link Fort Davis with Big Bend did intrigue one of the latter park’s more prominent advocates, Everett E. Townsend. In December 1937, the Alpine resident wrote to his friend, William Hogan, historian of the NPS’s Region III, to seek inclusion of Fort Davis in the next round of historic site surveys undertaken by Hogan’s

69 Wilcox to the GLO, April 27, 1937.

staff. The director, while polite, confronted what he saw as the critical issue: "I have never been sold on the historical importance of Fort Davis." He had visited the site, and considered the ruins to be "very interesting." Yet Hogan wondered: "Wherein did the history of Fort Davis differ from the history of dozens of frontier forts in the West?" He warned Townsend that "remains alone won’t justify its designation as possessed of national historical significance." His friendship with the Big Bend promoter, however, led Hogan to ask for more information about the fort. Hogan then warned Townsend: "We have been instructed to keep correspondence of this nature confidential." But the director closed with this promise: "Personally, I would be very happy if such claims for the Fort could be made." 71

Townsend’s response sounded like park service research of the 1950s and 1960s that would convince the advisory board and Congress of the merits of Fort Davis. He spoke of the isolation and distance of the post, as well as the presence of Indian bands traveling back and forth from Mexico and the Southwest. Townsend called Wild Rose Pass "the most dangerous spot on the Transcontinental Trail," and highlighted the Confederate takeover in the 1860s. Most striking for Townsend was the scale of Fort Davis’s region. As a regimental post, it covered for a short time territory "as large as the combined area of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont." He conceded that "no great battles were ever fought there," but believed that the NPS should recognize that Fort Davis "was the magnet of attraction for the adventurer and the romantically inclined and it has a thrilling history." Then in an intriguing reference to the cattle business as the basis of Fort Davis's history, Townsend concluded that the region was "built ... by four races, the American, Mexican, Indian, and the Negroes - the latter were [post-Civil] war troops." Hogan’s reply indicated the esteem with which the park service held Townsend’s opinions: "I think that you have made out a good case for the fort’s importance, and I am grateful to you for taking the time to write out the statement." Hogan guaranteed that "the Advisory Board of the Park Service will undoubtedly consider the Fort Davis claims to national significance along with other western sites." Because there were so many frontier posts, said Hogan, there was "a tendency to dismiss any of them as ‘just another fort site.’" The Region III director hoped to "pick out a very few in the Southwest and try to prove them outstanding," and he believed that Townsend’s entreaty gave Fort Davis "a good possibility for inclusion in that group." 72

It is doubtful whether Barry Scobee and the Fort Davis civic officials knew the extent of Townsend’s correspondence with the park service. Yet the NPS could not act on the proposal until 1941. In the interim Scobee continued to gather evidence about the site, including documents brought from the National Archives in Washington by Dorothy Love, daughter of the Dallas state senator responsible for the Scenic Loop legislation.

71Bill Hogan to Mr. (Everett E.) Townsend, Alpine, TX, December 14, 1937, Administrative History (1937) File, FODA Library.

72Townsend to Hogan, February 24, 1938; Hogan to Townsend, June 1, 1938, Administrative History (1938) File, FODA Library.
Scobee wrote of Miss Love's discovery of records about the "first" fort (1854-1861), especially its physical dimensions and the daily life of its soldiers. He also took visitors on walking tours of the grounds, eventually gathering stories like that of Mrs. George W. Stuart, whose father had been Lieutenant J.M.T. Partello of the 5th U.S. Infantry, stationed at Fort Davis in 1889. Even though she had been only five years old, Mrs. Stuart recalled hiking with her father to the top of Sleeping Lion Mountain and "shooing away a panther that followed us." She had also enjoyed walking into Hospital Canyon and shouting to hear the "double echo" it produced. Her father had reportedly been "the best rifle shot in the world," and "Prince Alexis of Russia came to Fort Davis to visit him, on that account in part." Mrs. Stuart’s comments to Barry Scobee upon her return after nearly 50 years were especially touching: "When I got to Fort Davis Tuesday, and into the old pitifully tumbled-down post, I recalled and recalled, with a pain in my throat for the old, old days and my gallant father."73

The year 1941 marked a watershed for the nation and Fort Davis. The war in Europe had drawn Americans ever closer to participation, and the conservative mood of the country continued the Depression-era focus upon history and its patriotic uses. That year also the local promoters of Fort Davis (without knowing it) had reached the half-way point in their campaign for park status. It had been 23 years since Carl Raht had popularized the Davis Mountains and energized his assistant, Barry Scobee, to preserve west Texas military history. It would also be two decades more before President John F. Kennedy would sign legislation bringing Fort Davis into the national park system. Yet the work undertaken that fateful year dramatized both the potential and the shortcomings of the 40-year crusade to make Fort Davis a national historic site. Among the features present for the first time in 1941 was a better-organized local community, led by the "Mile High Club." Formed two years earlier to replace the Fort Davis Lions Club, the fraternal group engaged in the type of lobbying and letter-writing that they had witnessed with the Alpine chamber of commerce and its push for Big Bend. Also different was the willingness of the park service to promote the fort within the federal government. Even the concepts put forward for uses of the post showed more imagination, and prominent state officials in Austin and Dallas applauded these efforts as they had not before.

Fort Davis’s Mile High Club started the latest round of promotion in the fall of 1940, when by chance a summer visitor named T. Whitfield Davidson expressed interest in helping create a state park at the post. Davidson was a judge of the U.S. District Court in Dallas, and knew many important state and federal officials in Austin and throughout Texas. He and the club decided that their major shortcoming in negotiations to preserve Fort Davis had been their inability to control the land upon which the park would be located. The judge agreed to visit with the heirs to the John James estate in San Antonio, and to suggest that they grant an option for purchase to the Mile High Club. This they did, but only for a period of six months. In addition, the heirs asked

73 Scobee, "Exact Location of Original Army Post at Fort Davis Is Determined Thru Search of War Department Archives," Alpine Avalanche, July 14, 1939; Scobee, "Woman Returns to Old Fort Davis," Alpine Avalanche, June 9, 1939.
a total of $25,000 for the 640 acre parcel, or about $40 per acre. Research by the club in county records revealed that the James family only paid taxes on the property at an assessed valuation of $4,000, leading Barry Scobee and A.V. Chapin, secretary-treasurer of the club, to wonder if the heirs wanted to profit inordinately from the public sector.74

In February 1941, the Mile High Club learned from state senator H.L. Winfield, who represented the Davis Mountains area in Austin, that he would introduce legislation to appropriate $1.5 million to match private funds needed to create Big Bend National Park. The club sought advice from Winfield, Townsend, and others at the state capital about introducing a similar bill for Fort Davis. The James purchase option was not signed until April of that year, nearly a month after the deadline for submission of new legislation. At that point the club analyzed several strategies, one of which was to approach the state highway department. Judge Davidson knew that the state gasoline tax had given the highway department "a large income," and he suggested that "if they were specifically authorized to take over this property, there would be no appropriation necessary." Absent their support, the Mile High Club inquired of Senator Winfield about a waiver of legislative rules to allow the Fort Davis bill. He warned his constituents that "it will be necessary to get the consent of the entire Senate;" a condition exacerbated by the opposition he was encountering to his Big Bend request.75

Had it not been for the commitment of Judge Davidson, the 1941 campaign for the fort never would have achieved momentum. Even though the locals failed to convince the state legislature to change its mind, to have the James family reduce its asking price, or to solicit private donations to purchase Fort Davis outright, the Mile High Club learned invaluable lessons that would be applied on the long journey to national park status after World War II. Davidson on more than one occasion told friends that he would have donated all the money if he could; he also spoke with donors who pointed out the absurdity of the James' demands. The judge addressed the Texas legislature on behalf of Fort Davis, and crafted an imaginative program for use of the park that broke precedent with the locals' emphasis on tourism. Davidson came to town in the summer of 1941 to speak to the Mile High Club about his wish "for the state to establish a summer school in the nature of a chautauqua on this ground." He wanted Texas public school teachers to come to Fort Davis to "receive a course of lectures in:

(a) American History.
(b) The Fundamentals of our Government and its Historical Background.
(c) In Comparative Governments and Economics."

74Scobee to Hamilton, October 13, 1941.

75A.V. Chapin, Secretary-Treasurer, Mile High Club, Fort Davis, TX, to T.W. Davidson, U.S. District Judge, Dallas, TX, March 28, 1941; Davidson to S. Engelking, San Antonio, TX, March 25, 1941; Chapin to Tom L Beauchamp and James W. McClendon, Austin, TX, and Thomas B. Love, Dallas, April 18, 1941, Administrative History (1941) File, FODA Library.
The judge would invite to the Fort Davis teachers institute "the best talent of America . . . members of the Supreme Court and ex-members of that body." What concerned Davidson most was that "our State institutions have followed religiously the non-political and non-sectarian idea, leaving the youth open to the teachings of every 'ism.'" He hoped that "if the school teachers were given an attractive [railroad] rate to come here to this wonderful climate, and [a] proper course put on, a long step would be taken in reviving the Americanism of Washington and Jefferson." He believed that "six or eight men can underwrite this proposition without taking practically any loss." In return they would be "sponsoring and founding an institution that will place Texas in another leadership of our nation in a most vital and important aspect."76

Once it became apparent that the Texas legislature could not consider the Fort Davis proposal for 1941, the consortium of local and statewide sponsors immediately made plans for the following year's session. W.A. Moller of Fort Davis offered $5,000 toward the purchase of the James property, while Judge Davidson approached the family to reduce the asking price by 20 percent; a figure that legislators might find more acceptable. Tom Hamilton, a lawyer from Waco, visited the Davis Mountains in the summer of 1941 with his wife and son, the latter a captain in the U.S. Army. The Hamiltons had the same experience in the town of Fort Davis as did many urban Texans: "A beautiful little western city where you receive the hearty hand-shake and welcoming smile of those bronze-faced and warm-hearted, stalwart men and women of the Texas frontier of long ago." It was at the abandoned Army post that the Hamiltons were most moved: "I saw the brick walls of the buildings still standing, but the roofs and all wood-work had rotted from the ravages of time." The sight of "bleaching bones that lay around, and the heels of shoes and horseshoes, together with rusted belt buckles," led the Waco attorney to dream that "there passed before me a panoramic parade [of] the brave men . . . guarding the lives and homes of the early settlers." Unaware that most of the soldiers at Fort Davis had been black, and that there was no record of any Indian attack near the town, Hamilton nonetheless spoke to the myth of the Army frontier that Barry Scobee hoped would solidify Fort Davis in the minds of park service surveyors.77

Like Judge Davidson, Tom Hamilton tried to energize public opinion on behalf of his newfound love for the history of the Davis Mountains. Upon his return home that fall, the lawyer wrote a lengthy piece in the Waco Sunday Tribune-Herald for September 14 that included a sketch of a gate at the entrance to what Hamilton called "the sacred frontier fort." He also recounted the vision he had while standing on the post grounds for "this shadow of a memorial." He had already spoken to Pat Neff, president of Hamilton's hometown school, Baylor University, who as a former chairman of the state parks board "has given the plan his full and unstinted endorsement." After approaching

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76Davidson to W.C. Graves, Texas State Senate, Austin, May 2, 1941; Davidson, Speech to Mile High Club, n.d. 1941, Administrative History (1941) File, FODA Library.

77Chapin to Davidson, October 27, 1941; Davidson to W.A. Moller, Fort Davis, TX, October 24, 1941, Administrative History (1941) File, FODA Library; Tom Hamilton, "Wacoan Proposes That Fort Davis Get State's Care," Waco Sunday Tribune-Herald, September 14, 1941.
state senators and representatives, Hamilton promised to "present the matter to Hon. Coke Stevenson, our governor and the state park board, together with the state highway commission and likewise the railway commission." The attorney, speaking in the months prior to the U.S. entry into the Second World War, believed as did Judge Davidson that Fort Davis would "give evidence of our patriotic pride and a proper respect for the patriots who stood on the watch tower when Texas was but a wilderness, and did their part to help blaze the trail for the Texas of today."^78

The looming reality of global conflict seemed far away from Fort Davis in that spring and summer of 1941, as the Mile High Club labored as never before to secure federal or state preservation of its military heritage. The war would remove all funding for new parks, and visitation at most NPS units would decline precipitously in the face of gasoline rationing and travel restrictions. Thus it was most ironic that in August of that year, Region III sent to west Texas Aubrey Neasham, "regional supervisor of historic sites," to determine whether Fort Davis fell under the guidelines of the Historic Sites Act. Relying heavily on the advice of Big Bend's Everett Townsend, Neasham decided that "the story of Fort Davis comes within the national theme of 'Westward Expansion and the Extension of National Boundaries, 1830-1890;' one of the categories targeted in the 1935 mandate. Neasham, a veteran of many similar surveys for the regional office, believed that the "museum possibilities at Fort Davis are excellent, because of the military story which centers there." Yet because the state of Texas had already funded the Alpine-based "museum of the West Texas Historical and Scientific Society," Neasham concluded that "only minor exhibits at Fort Davis would seem to be appropriate."^79

Neasham's reference to the work of the Texas state park commission in the Davis Mountains-Big Bend area unfortunately resurrected the old problem for Fort Davis boosters: jurisdiction over the preservation work needed at the post, and future management of visitor facilities. The regional historian, in language to be repeated by his successors from the 1950s onward, called the post "the best preserved historic United States military fort in the Southwest." He warned that "it is rapidly deteriorating," but believed that "much of its original appearance could be saved, if proper stabilization and repair measures are undertaken in the not too distant future." Neasham credited the "fair state of preservation" he found to "the fact that Fort Davis is part of an estate," as well as his discovery that "several families live in some of the old buildings, thus insuring a minimum of protection against vandalism." Like the GLO's H.L. Wilcox, Neasham considered the post as part of a larger network of attractions for visitors to west Texas,

^78 Hamilton, "Wacoan Proposes That Fort Davis Get State's Care."

including the NPS's own Big Bend, the McDonald Observatory, Balmorhea state park, and Sul Ross State Teachers' College.  

Where Neasham disappointed the Mile High Club was in his suggestion that Fort Davis be managed by the state of Texas. The state park board had an option on the site, which would give the area "adequate protection." As with the working arrangement at Indian Lodge, Neasham called for a park service-operated CCC camp "to repair and stabilize the buildings." Then he wrote: "Classification and designation of this area as a national historic site, to be administered by the Texas State Parks Board in cooperation with the National Park Service, is recommended." This he believed "would bring [Fort Davis] to the attention of the nation as the outstanding historic military post, architecturally, in the Southwest."  

Coming as it did just weeks after the Texas legislature had rejected the entreaties of the Mile High Club, Fort Davis boosters had little to cheer in the fall of 1941. Their most forceful effort to date on behalf of park status left them disillusioned, a factor that only worsened with the news in December of the Japanese bombing of the U.S. Navy fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. As early as May of that year, the club had tried to link a proposed park to the military preparedness strategies already underway nationwide. A.V. Chapin wrote to Thomas Love to see whether Army surveys of the roads in the Davis Mountains could somehow be the catalyst to complete the mountain parkway. When the Dallas state senator did not respond in the affirmative, Chapin expressed the first real sense of defeat evident in 20-plus years of promotion of Fort Davis. Writing to Judge Davidson, Chapin said: "We do not want you to possibly feel that we are letting you down after receiving the [James property] option through you." The Mile High Club, however, had to admit what Barry Scobee had kept well-hidden: "The people here who are most interested [in the park concept] are the little business men and general run of citizens of the community, and not particularly the well to do ranchers." Chapin then told Senator Love in September, after the weight of defeat had sunk in to the Mile High Club: "It is a hard struggle for a small group who have to spend most of their time making a living and still try to do something to benefit the community and the State in which we live, but we intend to do our best."  

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80 Ibid.  
81 Ibid.  
82 Chapin to Love, May 26, September 6, 1941; Chapin to Davidson, April 26, 1941, Administrative History (1941) File, FODA Library.
CHAPTER THREE

The New West Meets the Old:
Creating Fort Davis National Historic Site,
1941-1961

While the Second World War redefined America in a thousand ways, the relationship between public initiative and private power in the Davis Mountains remained constant. From 1941-1960, local interest committed to creation of a national park at Fort Davis attempted to identify the financial means to acquire the post property and preserve its story. In addition, the local economy failed to expand with that of the nation as a whole, leaving the youth of Fort Davis little choice but to seek their futures elsewhere. What did change were political attitudes in the Texas congressional delegation, national sentiment for historic preservation, and the decision by the National Park Service after World War II to examine more closely the significance of the Davis Mountains' abandoned military post. Yet it would require a serendipitous sequence of political events to bring Barry Scobee's dream to life, and even then local boosters would wonder at times what exactly they had accomplished.

Economically, World War II revitalized the United States as Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal social welfare programs had not. Gerald D. Nash wrote in *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (1991) about the stunning federal investment in military hardware, uniformed personnel, and support services from 1941-1945. Whereas the nation had faced in 1933 an unemployment rate of nearly one-third of the adult work force, by 1939 that statistic still hovered around 20 percent; this despite federal spending on such programs as the park service's CCC camps and the creation of new parks. Yet the imperatives of national security, coupled with the costs of a "high-tech" war against the Axis powers (Germany and Japan), led FDR to spend some $260 billion to prosecute the Allied effort. This translated into lavish expenditures in urban and rural areas of the country for military installations, defense plants, and the like. By 1945 southern California, for example, had garnered $45 billion of that amount, with smaller percentages going to other cities on the East and West Coasts, the Great Lakes, and the desert Southwest. Unemployment as a result of this federal investment dropped to a statistically insignificant one percent, and postwar planning attempted to maintain both that prosperity and the source of funding that had made it possible.¹

In the years after the war, the nation's economy would pursue a mixture of public and private spending linked to military preparedness called the "Cold War" (the struggle between American democracy and Russian Communism), and the consumerism triggered first by pent-up demand for goods and services, then by the staggering population growth known as the "Baby Boom." Landon Jones wrote in *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation* (1980) about the linkage between

The New West Meets the Old: 1941-1961

growing families in the postwar years, their increased standard of living, and the quest for comfort and security that included tourism and eventually settlement in the "Sunbelt" region of the South and West. Cities became places to earn a living, while the suburbs attracted the housing of these new families. They in turn sought escape from both settings in tourism and recreation, creating the statistic in 1954 that one American in three would visit a national park that year; up from merely one in sixteen at the beginning of the park system four decades earlier. Hitting the road, seeing America's wonders, and absorbing the complexity of the nation's past became goals for millions of citizens, and every town with some natural or historical attraction engaged in the quest for visitor dollars as well as conventional economic expansion. ²

2This shift of emphasis to mobility and leisure should have eased the path of supporters of park status for Fort Davis. So too should have been the essential conservatism of the nation from 1941-1960. Michael Kammen noted how the shared purpose of the war, plus the economic "miracle" stimulated by so vast a program of federal spending for national security, forced promoters of New Deal historical and cultural programs to reassess their themes. "If cultural relativism implied moral relativism," said Kammen of the more controversial New Deal agencies, "both would have to be discarded in favor of a traditionally defined idealism." Then after 1945, "older and individualized crafts looked attractive in an age of standardization. The calm of rustic museum villages looked desirable in an age of intense bustle." From this Kammen recognized yet another series of competing emotional forces at work on American historical memory: "The common denominators in postwar statements of mission stressed their educational objectives and their desire to preserve oases of the pastoral, pre-industrial past at a time of startling technological change."³

As it had prior to 1945, Jeff Davis County did not move in the directions of the rest of America in the postwar era. Pablo Bencomo and his peers from Fort Davis left town for service in the nation's armed forces, traveling the world and learning of the opportunities, and in Pablo's case, the freedoms awaiting people of all colors and classes elsewhere in the United States. Within the county, opportunity shrank as the fledgling tourism industry, cultivated so assiduously by the Mile High Club and funded by public revenues, collapsed with travel restrictions and the movement of young men and women into uniform or defense industries far away. Jacobsen and Nored recounted how the Davis Mountains State Park's Indian Lodge was forced to close for lack of patrons, only to reopen when "wives of cadets stationed at the Marfa Air Base were housed [there] after literally all available housing was utilized." Without visitors, federal programs, or donors willing to fund park creation, Fort Davis endured the war with little hope of tempering the forces that for a generation had limited its options.⁴

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³Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 532, 537-38.

⁴Pablo Bencomo interview, January 4, 1996; Jacobsen and Nored, Jeff Davis County, 277.
Statistics for the years 1941-1960 reinforce this cycle of isolation and decline for Jeff Davis County; conditions that the park service commented upon at length when asked in 1953 and 1960 to study the feasibility of a park at the abandoned post. The county's population fell in 1950 by 12 percent from the prewar census (from 2,375 to 2,090). This pattern became more evident when the four voting precincts were counted. Precinct 1 (the town of Fort Davis) had grown 14 percent (from 537 to 623); yet the village remained 32 percent smaller than it had been in 1930. Precinct 2 (the northeastern quadrant of the county) had dropped the most in ten years, from 652 people to 450 (off 31 percent), and Precinct 3 in the southeast declined 24 percent (from 481 to 368). Even Precinct 4, southwest of town and site of the "Valentine boom" of 1930-1940, lost population by eight percent.

What these numbers meant for social and economic conditions in wartime Jeff Davis County was validation of Jacobsen and Nored's comment that "many youngsters moved away to find work elsewhere." The median income for the county in the 1940s was $1,773, or 78 percent of the Texas average. Fifty-four percent of all county families earned less than $2,000, itself an amount one-sixth below the state standard. Educational achievement for county adults in 1950 was a mere 7.8 years. This may explain the fact that 47 percent of all adults employed in the county in 1950 were classified as farm laborers. In matters of race, the census that year still counted Hispanics as "whites," but the black population had grown from 18 in 1940 to 26 in 1950; an increase of 31 percent, and a number of blacks greater than had resided in the county for a generation.

By 1960 the statistical profile of Jeff Davis County had changed little, even as the successful movement for creation of Fort Davis National Historic Site got underway. The population base fell again by 24.3 percent; down from 2,090 in 1950 to 1,582 a decade later, the lowest number in 40 years. Population density slipped to 0.7 per square mile, against a national average in 1960 of over 30 people per square mile. These numbers translated into a depressing loss of 16.2 percent of all families in the "family-conscious" era of the Fifties. Unemployment numbers were also included for the first time in general county census data, and Jeff Davis County had 10 percent of its adults out of work. Education had not improved at all in ten years, again leveling at 7.8 years per adult. This statistic is striking in comparison to the national emphasis on schooling, triggered in the late 1950s by the Russian space launch "Sputnik," the baby boom, and the advancing complexity of the marketplace. The average American adult had by the year 1959 a 12th grade education, rendering Jeff Davis County some 35 percent below the nation's standard of learning. This also translated to median income, at $3,877 in 1960 only 79 percent of the Texas average ($4,884). More than one worker in three earned less than $3,000 (or $1.50 per hour, when the minimum wage was $1.25 per hour), which meant that 34.5 percent of Jeff Davis County workers received but 61 percent of the Texas median income. Finally, this pattern of decline affected the black population of the county. Census enumerators in 1960 could find only one black resident

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5Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950.

6Ibid.; Jacobsen and Nored, Jeff Davis County, 296.
in Jeff Davis County (a loss of 96 percent since 1950). This may explain in part the confusion in the minds of local residents when the NPS historians sent to Fort Davis not only discovered in the federal records the importance of the black units to the post's history. This was manifest, in the words of Southwest Region historian Robert M. Utley, when county residents referred to the U.S. Army regulars as "nigger soldiers," even as they revered the white officers in command.\footnote{Seventeenth Census, 1950; Interview with Robert M. Utley, Albuquerque, NM, October 23, 1994.}

In spite of these conditions, the Mile High Club kept to its goal of park status for Fort Davis; a dream that they hoped would come true in 1945 when local rancher Mac Sproul purchased for $16,000 the 640-acre site of the old military post. This was half the amount that the club had asked of the Texas Centennial Commission a decade earlier, and $9,000 below the price quoted to Judge Davidson a mere four years earlier by the James family. Sproul's acquisition brought ownership closer to town, and allowed local interests to seek alternative funding strategies. These emerged the following year (1946), when a Houston attorney, D.A. Simmons, offered Sproul $25,000 for 453.9 acres for the land encompassing the ruins of the old fort. Simmons had achieved an impressive career in the law, including service as an advisor to U.S. Senator Tom Connally (D-TX), to the fledgling international peacekeeping body, the United Nations, and in 1945 as the president of the prestigious American Bar Association (ABA). A magazine section of the \textit{Houston Chronicle} claimed in 1956 that Simmons had first come to the Davis Mountains in 1902 with his father, assistant Texas attorney general D.E. Simmons. Supposedly the elder Simmons had "acquired" the fort "for his son . . . who was then five years old." Whatever the source of this information, the younger Simmons and his wife, the former Elizabeth Daggett, spent 30 years traveling to historic sites around the country, and it was their love of the past, said Simmons' widow in 1966, that "influenced his determination to do something about Fort Davis."\footnote{Scobee, "Historic Old Fort Davis Military Post, Established in 1854, Is Sold," \textit{Alpine Avalanche}, June 8, 1945; Scobee, "Old Fort Davis Military Post Changes Hands Again," \textit{Alpine Avalanche}, May 10, 1946; L.A. Wilke, "Fort Davis Return?" \textit{The Houston Chronicle Rotogravure Magazine}, September 16, 1956; Interview of Mary Williams, FODA, with Eugene (Dude) Sproul, Fort Davis, August 20, 1987; Mrs. John Curtis Jackson to Franklin G. Smith, FODA Superintendent, October 14, 1966, Use of Buildings, Grounds Prior 1963 File, FODA Library. Mrs. Jackson was the widow of D.A. Simmons.}

The arrival of the Simmons family brought money and attention to the post that had been missing before the war from the efforts of Barry Scobee and the Mile High Club. The Houston lawyer organized the "Old Fort Davis Company," attracting as shareholders the business elite from town. Simmons told the \textit{Houston Magazine} in February 1947 that he sought a "dual purpose of preserving this historical spot and for furnishing vacation homes for the ever-growing number of health and pleasure seekers who are at last learning of the scenic beauty and the health producing quality of the high, pure mountain air, both of which nature has so generously allocated to Jeff Davis." The new owner hired Dude Sproul and several other local residents to build a fence around the property, fill in the abandoned wells, erect a gate at the entrance, and convert "one
of the old barracks into an information center and trading post." The officers' quarters across the parade grounds would become "modern tourist apartments," said the Houston Magazine, and "most of the old buildings erected of adobe clay will be destroyed." Encouraging news to Simmons and the Mile High Club was "the reported plan of Dallas capital to build a fine resort near the 8,000 foot Mt. Mitre, which is only a scant dozen miles from Fort Davis." This would be proof to the outside world that the post and its environs could become "a gathering place of those who, in the summers to come will bask in the ever present sunshine and drink in the rare beauty and the pure air of 'mile high' Texas."9

Through his Old Fort Davis Company, Simmons was true to his word. He brought to the Mile High Club a sophisticated vision of promoting the post that included advertising in area newspapers in June 1947 about the dedication ceremonies for the completion of the 75-mile Scenic Loop Highway. The locals now had funds to print handbills that offered no less than eight reasons to stop in town, among them "The Old Fort Davis Riding Stables," managed by Ben Lotspeich; Hospital Canyon; "Indian Emily's Grave;" and "The Historic Ruins," which promised visitors the site "where Indian Emily died, and where the first Christmas tree in West Texas was set up in 1867," The source of much of this information was the Simmons-subsidized printing of Barry Scobee's book, Old Fort Davis, which incorporated all the legends and stories that the county Justice of the Peace had collected in his thirty years in town. The San Antonio Express took note of Scobee's work, and legitimized its place in the history of west Texas: "By preserving the spot's historic and romantic associations, Mr. Scobee's book should attract many Texans to visit the old fort and find their sojourn enriched."10

While the Old Fort Davis Company pressed the publicity angle, D.A. Simmons' work crews remodeled the first three houses along Officers' Row, and offered them for rent. This encouraged a group of five Fort Davis residents to approach Simmons in May 1948 to lease acreage in Hospital Canyon for construction of the "Fort Davis Boys Camp." They spent $10,000 to pour concrete floors upon which to install tents and a screened mess hall. They then leased the camp to a Mr. and Mrs. Tenney, managers of the nearby boys' camp at the Prude ranch, who envisioned an "exclusive prep school" at the post. This venture lasted only one summer, and by 1951 the company negotiated with Sul Ross State Teachers College and with George W. Donaldson of the Tyler school system to offer a summer institute for Texas school teachers interested in conducting their own outdoor education programs. Donaldson told the Alpine Avalanche prior to the start of the first (and only) Fort Davis teachers institute that his goal was to show postwar youth the "thousand and one things that go to make mentally rounded-out

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9Jacobsen and Nored, Jeff Davis County, 344; "Old Fort Davis Being Restored," Houston Magazine, February 1947.

citizens in comprehending the country's resources." Speaking prophetically, Davidson warned that "many city children do not know where the milk they drink, nor the vegetables they eat, come from." The Texas educator admitted that "through no fault of their own they haven't the slightest notion of the meaning of conservation or the preservation of our national heritage of outdoor wealth and health and pleasure." Perhaps the beauty and history of Fort Davis could help "the generations now and to come . . . learn enough about these things to be instrumental in saving our country in its land and natural resources."  

Teachers institutes, no matter how appropriate, could not generate the revenue needed by D.A. Simmons to render Fort Davis a self-sustaining venture. On more than one occasion he confided to his wife, Elizabeth: "I don't know how we'll ever manage it, but I do not propose . . . to see that fabulous place further deteriorate." That sentiment led Simmons in 1949 to read in Texas Parade Magazine a story about the joint partnership undertaken by the state parks board, the Interior department, and the Catholic archdiocese of San Antonio to restore the Eighteenth-century "Mission San Jose" in that community. Simmons wrote to his friend, Gordon K. Shearer, executive secretary of the parks board, to explain his plans for Fort Davis and to seek advice on forging a similar agreement with the state and the NPS. He told Shearer that he had bought the post because he had learned while staying at the Indian Lodge of "a Dallas real estate man [who] was contemplating purchasing the site . . ., clearing off all the old ruins and subdividing it for mountain cabins for people in his vicinity." Simmons had heard of the work of the Mile High Club on behalf of the fort, and also "of the non-interest of anybody in Texas officialdom with authority to do anything about it." He then remarked on the power of politics to dictate creation of Texas parks: "I like Indian Lodge and the state park, but just why anybody would establish it and leave the old Fort with all of its history to disintegrate, is somewhat beyond me."  

Outlining his proposal to Shearer, the Houston attorney noted how he had refurbished a total of eight buildings on site, and had improved the assessed value of Fort Davis to $171,694.52. Simmons himself could not afford much more work at the post, and was being "approached by first one and then another to do something with the property." Among its suggested uses were "a super-duper dude ranch, excluding the general public, or that it be made into a super tourist motel in a transcontinental highway chain, etc." Clearly these options did not appeal to the former ABA president, who reminded Shearer: "I need not stress my point that it should be preserved for posterity." Simmons knew of the state park's board's "lack of funds," and that the legislature, "unless pressured by blocks of voters, is not likely to buy property for the interest of future generations." He then referred to Barry Scobee's Old Fort Davis, which called the post "the most active of the Indian forts in the [18]50s, 60s, and 70s." For this

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11Jacobsen and Nored, Jeff Davis County, 344; Scobee, "Camping Education Classes Held at Fort Davis; Train for Conservation," Alpine Avalanche, July 6, 1951.

12Jackson to Smith, October 14, 1966; Simmons to Gordon K. Shearer, Executive Secretary, Texas State Parks Board, Austin, May 30, 1949, Administrative History (1950) File, FODA Library.
reason, said Simmons, "the people of this country in centuries to come will be more and more interested in this site." His records indicated that the post had "approximately" as many visitors "as are going down to the Big Bend National Park," and predicted: "Since it is the only cool summer spot in West Texas and is halfway between Carlsbad Caverns and the Big Bend Park, attendance in the future will undoubtedly grow by leaps and bounds." Simmons then closed by suggesting that in the event of his death (which would occur two years later), "I am quite sure the property would have to be sold for inheritance taxes." Given the postwar growth in travel that Simmons had outlined, he warned that someone else would be tempted to commercialize the fort; an outcome "which I would personally regret."¹³

Gordon Shearer did not offer any optimistic words to Simmons, who then hired a series of custodians to manage the property. The first couple to run Fort Davis were relatives of Mrs. Simmons, Mr. and Mrs. Walter M. Daggett of Pecos. They operated the post for one summer, and then the Simmonses contracted in 1950 with Ed Bartholomew of Houston and Leslie R. Scott of Alpine. The latter had been a radio announcer with KVLF-AM, and agreed to live year round at the fort. The Alpine Avalanche reported on January 13, 1950, that Scott would oversee a cafe, trading post, and "whatever seems needful to attract visitors to the Old Fort." Mrs. A.N. Alkire, the Fort Davis correspondent for the Avalanche, gave special mention to the post's "curio display," which she described as "the largest collection of Indian artifacts in this section of the country." She also noted that Scott would host a series of radio broadcasts on his former station, three times weekly, that highlighted the area in a "variety show" format of "music and talks." Scott, however, did not stay long at the fort, and Simmons replaced him with Louie Wiggs and Juan Razo. Ed Bartholomew also broke the lease after one year, and the Simmons family faced hiring more custodians without the prospect of additional revenue.¹⁴

The latest in a series of reversals of fortune for Fort Davis occurred in March 1951, when D.A. Simmons died of a heart attack at the age of 53. His wife, who would later marry John C. Jackson, recalled in 1966 how her husband's passing "spared him much of what I saw and experienced later" in managing the post. She wrote to the then-superintendent of the historic site, Franklin Smith: "You would have enjoyed knowing him, for he was a man of great depth, keen perception and vision." Without his advice and guidance, Mrs. Simmons advertised in the spring of 1952 in a series of Texas newspapers for someone to take over management of the post. The only serious respondent was Malcolm "Bish" Tweedy, a 34-year old war veteran and graduate of Princeton University whose father had been born and raised on a ranch west of San Antonio. Tweedy, who was living in San Angelo at the time, had married Sally Godfrey of Carlsbad, New Mexico, the year before, and their honeymoon had included an automobile trip to Big Bend and the town of Fort Davis. The young couple eventually

¹³Simmons to Shearer, May 30, 1949.

¹⁴Jacobsen and Nored, Jeff Davis County, 345; Mrs. A.N. Alkire, "New Manager at Old Fort Davis," Alpine Avalanche, January 13, 1950.
wanted more regular working hours, and their sense of history and drama (they had met while working at the San Angelo Civic Theatre) led them to answer Mrs. Simmons' solicitation.\(^{15}\)

The arrival of the Tweedys to Fort Davis began the final phase of the quest for a national park at the old post. Bish and Sally fell in love with the ruins, as they touched their sense of the romantic ((Bish recalled 43 years later that the grounds were "eerily beautiful"). They moved into one of the restored officers' quarters, took charge of the soda fountain and gift shop, and tried (unsuccessfully) to operate "The Bandana Room," a restaurant where Sally cooked and Bish served guests. Their chief source of income was the gift shop, a venture that paid for itself with the steady visitation of summer ("10 to 20 people during the week days and often up to a hundred or more on weekends"). The first winter (1952-1953), however, brought few tourists and less money to cover the $300 monthly lease. The Tweedys did have more time to roam the grounds, unearthing dozens of artifacts, and to witness the continuing process of deterioration. One legend that the Tweedys encountered was the discovery of over 100 whisky bottles buried by the post sutler behind his store just before the Confederate forces in 1861 marched into the Fort Davis area. The sutler, whom Tweedy learned was "a stubborn old Yankee from New England," supposedly did not want the "'dang rebels'" to drink his whisky, and he hid the bottles so that they could not be confiscated for a Southern victory celebration. In reality, the bottles were discovered (buried end to end) on Sleeping Lion Mountain (west of the modern-day parking lot). Bish Tweedy conceded some four decades later that the NPS may never know the real story of the buried whisky bottles.\(^{16}\)

This revelation led the Tweedys to close their dining room (they had served only about one dozen patrons that winter), and to convert the space into a museum. The notorious bottle collection was the "centerpiece," although visitors seemed eager to pay 25 and 50 cent admissions to view their "1858 quarter, the 10th Cavalry stencil and a lovely little brown earthenware ink bottle." The success of history as a drawing card for the Tweedys prompted them one night to discuss at a bridge game with George and Flora Merrill, longtime residents of Fort Davis, the need to preserve the site in some organized fashion. The Merrills agreed with the post caretakers that failure to solicit support from the federal and state governments rendered the next step "a community effort." Thus on February 18, 1953, the Tweedys hosted at their small museum 13 interested residents of the surrounding area who voted to become the "Davis Mountains Historical Society." They also decided to invite additional members for a second meeting on February 25, which selected as its officers George Merrill as president, R.D. McCready as vice-president, and Sally Tweedy as secretary-treasurer. Bish Tweedy agreed to become chairman of the museum committee, while Barry Scobee consented to assist him. Finally, the gathering voted to change their name to the "Fort Davis Historical Society," and to solicit funds for the "acquisition and preservation of the old Fort Davis Army Post


\(^{16}\)Bish Tweedy interview, January 4, 1995; Mary Williams to author, April 30, 1996.
and the preservation and marking of historical landmarks in the Davis Mountains area. They would also attempt to "collect and display objects of historical interest in a suitable museum and to preserve in writing or in permanent form the interesting historical talks and events of this area since the days of the early settlers together with such photographs and documents as may deserve preservation."\textsuperscript{17}

Energized with the ambition to succeed where others had failed, the Tweedys and their historical society colleagues undertook a letter-writing campaign to ascertain the merits of their proposal. A guest at the March 8 meeting, Mr. V.E. Smith, informed the group that "the national government is definitely interested in the restoration of the fort." It seemed that the NPS had inquired in February 1952 about including Fort Davis in its next round of studies, but no action had been taken. Mrs. Simmons came to the May 11 gathering in town, and expressed her interest "in working with the society to turn [sell] the property." At this point the members called upon Sally Tweedy to inquire of state officials the status of the Texas Historical Survey Commission. Allan Shivers, governor of Texas, replied that the commission would be appointed soon, and that he would support the inclusion of Fort Davis, as "several other people have written to me about this famous frontier post."\textsuperscript{18}

One member of the society had also written to Lemuel "Lon" Garrison, superintendent of Big Bend National Park, seeking his advice on the process of incorporation into the park service. Garrison wrote to M.R. Tillotson, Region III director, informing him that the historical society had invited him to their June 8 meeting to offer guidance on application procedures. Tillotson indicated official approval of "the revival of interest in the preservation of old Fort Davis," and considered it "highly desirable for you to attend the meeting . . . and keep in touch with further activity on this line." He did warn the Big Bend superintendent: "Fort Davis has not been approved or definitely classified by the [NPS] Advisory Board . . . and that a conservative attitude towards new proposals is to be expected in general." The regional director also warned Garrison that local interests needed to know that NPS designation as a "national historic site," with management by the state of Texas (as had been done for "San Jose Mission National Historic Site" in San Antonio) meant that "the Service would not then be actually taking it over and probably would not be in a position to contribute a great deal toward the area's development." San Jose, by comparison, had received "technical advice and some assistance but very little actual cash."\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.; "Museum at Old Fort Davis Planned By Fort Davis Historical Society," \textit{Alpine Avalanche}, March 6, 1953; Fort Davis Historical Society (FDHS) Notes, February 18, 25, 1953, FODA Library.

\textsuperscript{18}FDHS Notes, March 8, April 13, May 11, 1953; Memorandum of NPS Director to Region III Director, February 28, 1952, 1940s-1950s File, FODA Library; Mrs. Malcolm (Sally) Tweedy, Fort Davis, to Allan Shivers, Governor of Texas, Austin, May 29, 1953; Scobee, et al., to Judge J.R. Wheat, Chairman, Texas Historical Survey Committee, Austin, November 16, 1953, Administrative History (1953) File, FODA Library.

\textsuperscript{19}Memorandum of M.R. Tillotson, Region III Director, to Big Bend Superintendent, May 26, 1953, Administrative History (1950) File, FODA Library.
Traveling to Fort Davis on June 8, Lon Garrison met with 30 residents eager to hear how their neighbors to the south had brought the Park Service to far west Texas. The Big Bend superintendent gave the society a basic overview of his park, including "a review of tourist travel economics." In the question-and-answer session that followed, the most prominent query was "that the National Park Service might take over the area for restoration after purchase and administration as a National Monument." As politely as he could, Garrison outlined the paper trail from the NPS regional office to the service's advisory board. He also "added that as a practical matter the problem of securing funds for the extensive work necessary just seemed almost impossible." In his report to Tillotson, the NPS official said that "the group [historical society] does not seem to be well unified, which is regrettable, for old Fort Davis is a charming place and deserves better treatment than it is receiving now." Garrison remarked on the efforts of D.A. Simmons to restore the property; a rendering that he considered "far from accurate." "Most of the buildings are about gone," the superintendent reported, "and

Figure 8. Hospital Steward's Quarters in ruins (1950s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 9. Ruins of Officers’ Row (1953). Part of Littleton Report on Southwestern Forts. Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 10. Fort Davis Historical Society Parade at Centennial of Fort Davis (July 1954). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 11. HB 1-2-3 (Officers' Quarters) used as guest cottages in late 1940s. Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 12. Ruins of Officers Row, Old Sutlers' Store in background (1950s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.

Figure 13. Fort Davis Historical Society Museum in Operation (Sept. 1953). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 14. Officers' Row (early 1950s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 15. Ruins of Chapel with HB-15 (Two-Story Officers’ Quarters) on left (Sept. 1953). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 16. Ruins of Officers’ Row (early 1950s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
another year will just about complete the ruin." Further complicating matters was Bish Tweedy's statement to Garrison that "Mrs. Simmons is now asking $200,000 for the 480 acres which is quite unrealistic in [the superintendent’s] opinion."²⁰

Despite his misgivings about the local effort on behalf of Fort Davis, Garrison sought resolution as best he could. He learned from society members of the creation of the Texas Historical Commission, and promised to seek more information about it. He also believed that the society "does not appear to be a group that will have any money to spend, and will be limited in its functions to advisory assistance only." The superintendent then reported to the Santa Fe office that "1954 is the Centennial Year for Fort Davis and they are hoping to use this as a publicity feature to secure interest in their problem." Garrison warned Tillotson: "The first job remains for them to pull together better, and this is a field where I do not believe that we can provide leadership." He then closed with a personal note that revealed why the post attracted so much attention, despite opposition or indifference to its park status: "My own grandfather who went to the California goldrush in 1849 over the Old Overland Trail, had undoubtedly been at Fort Davis both coming and going." Garrison "had not anticipated this personal tie-in with the local history," and as a result "offered to consult with them at any time they felt it would be helpful."²¹

The society was not long in taking Garrison at his word, with Sally Tweedy writing him on June 15 asking for his help in "bringing Old Fort Davis to the attention of the National Parks Advisory Board." Garrison referred to NPS manuals on the matter, and informed the regional office (as had Aubrey Neasham 14 years earlier) that "this fort might well come within classification XI of the major historical themes, Westward Expansion and the Extension of the National Boundaries, 1830-1890." He urged consideration because of the deteriorating condition of the property, but cautioned that "the matter of land status and maintenance and operational procedures should be gone into before anything further is done." Tillotson's reply indicated the ironic political clout of such an isolated place as Fort Davis: "A general survey of the old U.S. military posts of the frontier in the Southwest was requested by the Washington Office some time ago, arising specifically from a recommendation on Fort Davis." The study was "to be completed this year, if at all possible, for the consideration of the Advisory Board at their November [1953] meeting." The regional director believed that "Fort Union, New Mexico, Fort Bowie, Arizona, and Fort Davis are sure to be at the top of the list." Until then, all Tillotson could advise was for Garrison "to keep in touch generally with the Fort Davis Historical Society." Also indicative of the political sensitivity of the report,

²⁰FDHS Notes, June 8, 1953; Memorandum of Lemuel A. (Lon) Garrison, Big Bend Superintendent, to the Region III Director, June 11, 1953, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Federal Records Center, National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, CO (cited as DEN FRC).

²¹Garrison to Region III Director, June 11, 1953.
the director told the Big Bend superintendent: "We leave this entirely to you, and I feel that you have handled it excellently to date. Your memorandum of June 11 is a particularly clear and helpful report on the situation."  

Because it had studied Fort Davis several times in the past, the regional office of the Park Service realized how complex the political networks in Texas could be. This became evident in August 1953, when U.S. Senate Minority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson (D-TX) received a letter from Pecos optometrist Glenn E. Stone. Dr. Stone and his family had visited Big Bend for the first time after 35 years of residence in west Texas, and they wanted to inform their state’s powerful senator of their dislike of the experience. "I have never seen more desolate, barren God forsaken country," said Stone, "particularly to be a national park," and he wondered how the Congress could "justify a cent of federal or state money being spent on it." The Pecos physician then informed Johnson: "What makes it difficult to understand is why the National Park Service and federal government would pass up an area of outstanding natural beauty such as is found around Ft. Davis." Stone considered the site "a point of high historical interest with lots of possibilities of development and restoration for that uninteresting wasteland." Stone marveled at the large number of people picnicking in the Davis Mountains on summer weekends, which made it "hard to find a spot that is not already taken," and hoped that Johnson could provide an answer to his question about the history of the park service in far west Texas.  

Known for his constituent service as well as his power in the halls of Congress, the top-ranked Democrat in the Senate submitted a terse inquiry to the NPS: "I will appreciate your giving serious consideration to this problem [the Stone letter], based on its merits. Please let me have as prompt a reply as possible." Hillory Tolson, formerly director of the Santa Fe regional office and then-acting director of the NPS, responded to Johnson by apologizing for Stone’s "uncomplimentary opinion of Big Bend." Tolson politely informed the Texas senator: "Many others have been impressed by the spectacular canyons, the geologic interest and the plant and animal life of the Park - features which were judged to be so outstanding as to merit inclusion in the National Park System." The acting director went on to describe in glowing terms the flora and fauna of the Rio Grande and Chisos Mountains, and gently reminded Johnson: "You are, of course, familiar with the great interest in the State of Texas and elsewhere in the preparations being made for the formal dedication of the Park in 1954;" an event to be attended by no less a personage than President Dwight D. Eisenhower, himself a Texas native.  

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22 Mrs. Tweedy to Garrison, June 15, 1953; Memorandum of Garrison to the Region III Director, June 17, 1953; Memorandum of Tillotson to the Big Bend Superintendent, June 24, 1953, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, DEN FRC.

23 Glenn E. Stone, Pecos, TX, to Lyndon Johnson, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC, August 10, 1953, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, DEN FRC.

24 Johnson to the NPS Director, Washington, DC, August 13, 1953; Hillory A. Tolson, Acting NPS Director, to Johnson, September 16, 1953, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, DEN FRC.
Because of its ongoing study of western forts, the park service decided to include some of its findings in Tolson's reply to Senator Johnson. He identified Fort Laramie National Monument on the North Platte River in eastern Wyoming as the service's choice "to interpret the role of the United States Army in aiding the opening and settlement of the American West." The letter referred to the advisory board study of southwestern posts, most notably Forts Union, Bowie, and Davis. He then mentioned a concept that President Eisenhower, a fiscal conservative, preferred for the Interior department's many projects in natural resource development; "partnership," or the collaboration of state and federal agencies to reduce costs for both parties. "Many western forts and military posts, of course," said Tolson, "figured prominently in our early Western history, but the Service must count upon the States and local patriotic organizations to preserve them." The Park Service to date managed 118 "historical areas," spread throughout the nation "to commemorate, so far as possible, the most significant phases of American history, within the limits of funds available for historical conservation." Tolson closed by reminding Johnson: "It is our hope that the States will be able to supplement our work by preserving other places deserving of historical conservation measures," and he said of Stone's inquiry: "We appreciate knowing of Dr. Stone's views and hope that this information will be useful to him."^25

Lyndon Johnson's interest in the Fort Davis case put regional NPS officials on notice to monitor the work of the advisory board. In late September 1953, Lon Garrison informed his Santa Fe superiors that the Texas Garden Clubs had met in Alpine, with their 128 members agreeing to promote the necessity of preserving the grounds and buildings. In addition, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram covered the appointments of Governor Shivers to the state historical survey committee. Garrison had good news to report about the Simmons' selling price, as Mrs. Simmons supposedly "has now placed a more reasonable valuation on the land and probably the Fort Davis Historical Society will secure a firm option within a short time." Aiding the local interests was Glenn Burgess, president of the Alpine-based West Texas Historical and Scientific Society. Garrison then requested that George Grant, the famed park service photographer, stop at Fort Davis upon his departure from Big Bend, "because of the current interest in this project and the meeting of the Historical Sites Advisory Committee this fall." Grant in turn advised John O. Littleton, Region III historian, to call on Mrs. Simmons while in Fort Davis for his "brief study of the frontier military posts of the Southwest" that he was crafting for the upcoming board meeting. Littleton did not want "to give the impression that my visit implies" park service commitment. Thus he asked Superintendent Garrison to offer some advice on the sentiments of the local sponsors prior to his arrival in the Davis Mountains.^26

^25Tolson to Johnson, September 16, 1953.

^26Garrison to Region III Director, September 29, 1953; John O. Littleton, Region III Historian, Santa Fe, to Mrs. D.A. Simmons, September 29, 1953; Memorandum of Littleton to Big Bend Superintendent, September 29, 1953, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, DEN FRC; "Fort Davis Shrine," Fort Worth Star-Telegram, September 27, 1953; "Fort Worth Attorney Named To Historical Survey Group," Fort
Chapter Three

Garrison's correspondence about the historical survey commission was prompted in part by the assiduous cultivation of that board by the Fort Davis proponents. An example of their exertions came in a letter from Barry Scobee and other members of the Old Fort Davis Company. Writing in November to Judge J.R. Wheat, chairman of the selection committee for state historic sites, Scobee et al., offered to travel to Austin to speak to Wheat's organization on behalf of a post that they deemed a "famous and remarkable old landmark that is so interwoven with Federal, Confederate, and Indian history." The Scobee party then informed Wheat that they knew "that in the same month President Eisenhower will dedicate the Big Bend National Park." Scobee hoped that Wheat's board could "induce the President to appear at the old fort celebration and thereby focus public landmarks." Gene Hendryx of Alpine, by now employed at KVLF radio, remembered that the locals believed that they could convince the former Supreme Allied Commander of the merits of Fort Davis because of his military background. Thus the Old Fort Davis Company was disappointed yet again when the White House could not accommodate their request.27

Inured by this time to the vagaries of park promotion, the historical society proceeded throughout 1954 with plans to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Fort Davis. The event, which was held on the weekend of October 9-10, tapped the historic resources of the Davis Mountains like no other celebration that old-timers could remember. John G. Prude, of the prominent local ranching family, was president that year of the historical society, and he also served as grand marshal of the parade. Jacobsen and Nored mentioned that this event "represented nearly every family in the area, some of which included four generations." By having the major economic interests heavily involved, along with the public schools, the society for the first time demonstrated the potential for Fort Davis to serve as a focal point for community life. This expansive mood touched the Hispanic neighborhood of town, as they hosted a rodeo and barbecue. In keeping with another old tradition, however, Anglo and Hispanic revelers retreated to separate dances in the evenings; the latter at the Anderson elementary school, the former at the high school. And in keeping with the legendary character of the celebration, Herbert Smith, superintendent of the Fort Davis school system, directed the "Indian Emily Pageant," which Pansy Evans Espy, related to two prominent families in the area, remembered decades later as very moving, if not historically accurate.28

The centennial celebration continued for several years after 1954, with its successor first the "Old Fort Days," then a more modest picnic at the cottonwood grove east of the post. The historical society, however, made do without the services either

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28 Jacobsen and Nored, Jeff Davis County, 338-39; Interview with Mrs. Pansy Evans Espy, Fort Davis, January 4, 1995.
of the park service or of Sally and Bish Tweedy. In February of that year, Lon Garrison received word from the NPS advisory board that "while Old Fort Davis was mentioned, no definite favorable action was taken on designation as a desirable area for inclusion." The Big Bend superintendent "assumed that this simply means that the Advisory Board is awaiting a further study and report, although generally favorable to the idea of preserving evidences of the western expansion." Garrison then asked Regional Director Tillotson about the most sympathetic means of explaining this to the local historical society, as "you are much closer to the overall picture including Fort Bowie and Fort Union than I am." Tillotson was not optimistic, telling Garrison: "The net effect of the Advisory Board reaction concerning Fort Davis . . . is that although it might be desirable to have Fort Davis or Fort Bowie or both, as well as Fort Union, it is not practical at the present time to make any attempt at acquisition or even recommendation." Again the rationale was the scarcity of funds in a conservative political age. Garrison’s reply to the Fort Davis sponsors was thus the same as in previous studies: "The National Park Service . . . could re-consider Fort Davis only if and when appropriations become adequate for the minimum essential current needs of existing areas."29

No amount of local enthusiasm could substitute for federal spending on Fort Davis or its restoration, and this latest rejection at the hands of the advisory board traumatized the Simmons family and the Tweedys alike. Both faced bleak financial futures with their fortunes linked to private management of the fort; the former in need of monies to reduce the debt on the property, while the latter faced a growing family (two daughters born while the Tweedys lived on the post grounds) with no increase in income to compensate. In the fall of 1953, Bish Tweedy explored the possibility of teaching in the local public schools, but discovered that he needed a state of Texas teaching credential. In order to do so, he moved his family the 26 miles to Alpine to attend Sul Ross Teachers College. The Tweedys, who had done so much to revitalize Barry Scobee’s dream of a park at Fort Davis, thought that they could negotiate with Mrs. Simmons to permit them to leave the property vacant during the week (when the Tweedys hosted few visitors), and return on weekends to meet their obligations to the public.

When Mrs. Simmons heard the Tweedys’ request, she denied it categorically, saying that she could not have the property left unattended. This exacerbated the strain under which both families operated. Mrs. Simmons demanded that the Tweedys vacate the fort, and Bish and Sally found themselves without support. Their fate turned out better than expected, as Bish gained employment through the Princeton network at a private boys’ school outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where for 24 years he taught history. The Tweedys did not discard their love of local history and old military posts, however, as they took over management of Fort Ligonier near their new

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29Memorandum of Garrison to Region III Director, February 25, 1994; Memorandum of Tillotson to the Big Bend Superintendent, March 4, 1954, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, DEN FRC; Jacobsen and Nored, *Jeff Davis County*, 339-40.
home, and restored it to the point that Fort Ligonier Days became the largest historical celebration in western Pennsylvania.30

For the remainder of the 1950s, the Fort Davis Historical Society labored to maintain some semblance of continuity in their quest to purchase the post from Mrs. Simmons. Custodians came and went with the same frequency as before, none of whom could make Fort Davis any more of a paying proposition than Sally and Bish Tweedy. The society tried to make the "Old Fort Days" more of a carnival than an historical celebration, as in 1956 they brought to town Oklahoma Indian dancers, Navajo sand painters, museum exhibits from the Big Bend Art Club, soldiers from the Texas National Guard, and the Odessa Junior College drill team, "Las Señoritas de las Rosas." Once again they produced the "Indian Emily" episode to the delight of visitors, and served buffalo meat at the barbecue; certainly an historical novelty in the heart of Texas cattle country. Events such as these cost nearly as much as the celebration received in gate receipts, however, and in that year the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) came to Fort Davis to claim that the historical society (which apparently had not incorporated as a non-profit entity) owed back taxes on their income. This led to an embarrassing sequence of letters between Mrs. Simmons, the society, and the IRS that detailed just how far the locals needed to go to purchase the fort. Her asking price was $115,000, and the earned income was not sufficient to send Mrs. Simmons even $250 per quarter in lease payments, let alone make a down payment on the old frontier fort.31

In May 1957, U.S. Representative J.T. Rutherford (Democrat from Odessa) asked Barry Scobee to rekindle efforts to preserve the post with federal money. Elmo Richardson wrote that "the greatest obstacle to preservation of the natural environment" in the post-World War II years "was the American tradition of progress." For Americans touched by the double trauma of depression and global conflict, "renewed development of resources was elevated into one of the primary tasks of the federal government." In the late 1940s, a conservative Republican congress, eager to dismantle the excesses of the prewar New Deal, entertained a proposal from "several western congressmen . . . that units of the national park system be opened to mineral exploration and lumbering." Again in 1952, critics of the Interior department wanted that agency's operating principle to be "one of disposition, not acquisition," which Richardson described as "'returning' the public domain and its resources to the states." The ascendancy of the World War II commander, Dwight D. Eisenhower, to the presidency from 1953-1961 brought to western resource development what Richardson called a "shared . . . belief in the commonality of individual effort and success."32


All was not lost for the patrons of American history and culture, however, as the competing force of preservation touched the West by the mid-1950s, culminating in the battle between two Interior department agencies, the NPS and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), over the latter's plans to construct a large multipurpose water project on the Colorado River within the boundaries of Dinosaur National Monument, on the border of western Colorado and eastern Utah. Massive outpourings of support for the park service (the famed Utah native and Harper's Magazine columnist, Bernard DeVoto, wrote a disparaging piece that year entitled, "Let's Close the National Parks") led Eisenhower officials to reject the USBR's scheme, and to push for NPS director Conrad Wirth's idea of "MISSION 66," described by Richardson as "a coordinated plan . . . whereby expanded facilities in parks and recreation areas would make it possible for the system to accommodate 80 million visitors by 1966 [coincidentally the golden anniversary of the park service itself, and the dedication of Fort Davis]."

Wirth realized that political realities dictated every step that his agency took, and in Richardson's words, ensured the future of parks like Fort Davis because he "perceived that he could secure funds by making Republican legislators and administrators aware of the terrible conditions [in the system] and then turn the rescue actions to their political credit." Of equal benefit to the promoters of Fort Davis was the national mood by the late 1950s favoring the historical interpretation of the West that Lady Bird Johnson dramatized at the 1966 dedication ceremonies. Michael Kammen noted that MISSION 66 "meant striking expansion in historical programs and in types of historical sites." As the pressures of the baby boom, the Cold War, and the nascent civil rights movement entered the consciousness of Americans, Kammen detected a desire for nostalgia, which he defined as "most likely to increase or become prominent in times of transition, in periods of cultural anxiety, or when a society feels a strong sense of discontinuity with its past." By 1960 the nation, in Kammen's words, would seek anew "patriotism, hero worship, and their historical underpinnings." This phenomenon came to be known in later years as the "heritage emphasis," but Kammen believed that "heritage that heightens human interest may lead people to history for purposes of informed citizenship."

Whatever the purposes of the Fort Davis boosters, the nation was more ready for remembrance of things past in the late 1950s than ever before, and the journey taken five decades earlier by Carl Raht and Barry Scobee to divine the story of the Davis Mountains would finally reach its end.

Promoters of the old military post moved cautiously in the months after announcement of the MISSION 66 initiative, mindful of the rejections that their entreaties had met since the early 1920s. One reason was the lack of enthusiasm within the Southwest Regional Office of the park service (SWR), which had, in the words of its historian in the late 1950s, Robert M. Utley, "said all the right things about history," but which was "heavily archeological," dating to the days of Frank Pinckley and his formation of the Southwestern National Monuments (SWNM) organization in the 1920s.

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33 Ibid., 111-12.

34 Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 610-11, 618, 620, 624, 628.
Utley, who would become chief historian in the Washington office of the park service, and later director of its "Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation," pointed out in an interview in 1994 that SWR "moved slowly" on completing its historical research mandated by the 1935 Historic Site Survey. This was due in part to the NPS decision to suspend new surveys after World War II, given the conservative fiscal mood of Congress. All this would change, however, with MISSION 66, and in 1957 the park service reinstituted the Historical Survey project.\(^{35}\)

Word of this change of heart on the part of the NPS energized Barry Scobee and his contemporaries in the town of Fort Davis, especially when they learned from Representative Rutherford that he wanted to build local momentum for creation of a park. A World War II soldier, the Odessa native had returned to Alpine with his veterans' benefits to attend Sul Ross Teachers College. There he had been a classmate of Gene Hendryx, and the two of them often had driven the 30 miles north to Fort Davis to roam the grounds of the post and climb in its ruins. Upon his election to Congress in 1954, the moderate Democrat pondered on ways to fulfill Barry Scobee’s dream, and in May 1957 wrote to Scobee to test his idea for generating public support. Based upon notes Rutherford had accumulated for the past two years, he thought that Scobee should set up an "Old Fort Davis Association," with membership and annual dues to sustain the promotional efforts. Linkage of the military history of Fort Davis to the campaign would work well in a conservative climate, thought Rutherford, as "members would enter with the rank of ‘Trooper,’ ‘Sergeant,’ and the like." Scobee should then embrace all the trappings of organizational structure, planning for some sort of "annual convention" which "alone would bring a sizeable group of people to the community." Finally, the association could not go wrong with the historical connection of the fort to the Indian wars, as Rutherford believed that "people are enchanted by the spirit and traditions of the Old West, and this would be in our favor."\(^{36}\)

Rutherford’s interest motivated the historical society to redouble its efforts to raise funds for the purchase of the fort property from Mrs. John Jackson (remarried after the death of D.A. Simmons). Further exciting local sponsors was the arrival in Fort Davis on October 15, 1957 of U.S. Senator Ralph W. Yarborough, who toured the museum maintained by the historical society, and inquired about the "practicability of the public obtaining title to the Fort and of having it declared a National Historic Site." The junior Democratic senator from Texas had first come to the fort in February 1929, when he was a young lawyer in El Paso. Taking an automobile trip with his friend, Tom Newman, Yarborough marveled at the sense of history that the site conveyed; a sense that mirrored his own love of the westward movement. Yarborough returned to Fort Davis on several occasions (even after leaving El Paso in 1931), and in the late 1930s he worked again in the Trans-Pecos area as an assistant state attorney general on the legislation to create

\(^{35}\)Robert M. Utley, interview, October 23, 1994; NPS Acting Director to G. Martin Merrill, President, Fort Davis Historical Society, Fort Davis, TX, October 14, 1958, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

Big Bend National Park. Unfortunately for Yarborough and the Fort Davis supporters, he learned soon after his October 1957 visit that the Jacksons' asking price ($115,000) was "so high that it had not only delayed the creation of a National project there, but had almost destroyed the feasibility of it."\textsuperscript{37}

Determined as never before to overcome the financial obstacles facing Fort Davis, Barry Scobee and the historical society met in February 1958 to discuss the lease held by Mrs. Jackson. The $1,000 lease payment that they made to the Jackson family "was considered by most of the members as too much," Scobee told his friend Frank Temple of the Texas Technological College library, and he moved that the society "give up operation of the Trading Post, as it was the money eater . . . but to continue the museum if possible." In the interim, Mrs. Jackson had visited Fort Davis and agreed to reduce her lease charges to $300 per year over a three-year period. Then in October 1958, the historical society convinced Mrs. Jackson to give them a purchase-option on the post (a total of 450 acres), prompting society president G. Martin Merrill to write NPS director Conrad Wirth informing the park service of this change of status. Wirth's office gave the society hopes that Washington had also changed its attitude about Fort Davis, advising Merrill that the renewed Historical Sites Survey program that year included the theme of "Western Expansion." Because "military and Indian affairs" comprised part of the mandate of the 1958-1959 survey, Fort Davis would be part of any list of potential parks that the NPS sent to Congress. The director's office also suggested that the historical society be aware of the distinction between a national monument and a national historic site. The park service could not guarantee under which category Fort Davis might fit, but Representative Rutherford assuaged the doubts of the local sponsors in May 1959 when he described the survey as "a long-range program now in its early stages." "You may count on my cooperation in every way possible," he told Frank Edwards, manager of the fort property in a letter reprinted in the \textit{Alpine Avalanche}, and he cast the situation in as broad a context as possible with his closing remark: "I realize the establishment of Old Fort Davis as a national shrine would be a great asset for West Texas and I have a high personal interest in it."\textsuperscript{38}

The critical person for Fort Davis now was no longer someone from the surrounding area, nor even Mrs. Jackson, but the Secretary of the Interior, Fred A. Seaton. A former owner of several small-town newspapers in his native state of Nebraska, Seaton had replaced in 1956 the embattled Secretary of the Interior, Douglas McKay, chastised for his role in the Dinosaur National Monument fiasco, and ridiculed in the media for his previous connection to the business world as a Chevrolet automotive


\textsuperscript{38}Scobee to "Frank" (Temple), February 11, 1958; "Society Leases Old Army Post At Fort Davis," \textit{El Paso Herald-Post}, n.d. (1957?), Fort Davis Historical Society-History File, FODA Library; Merrill to Wirth, October 1, 1958; Acting NPS Director to Merrill, October 14, 1958; "Old Fort Davis Studied As Shrine," \textit{Alpine Avalanche}, May 28, 1959, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
dealer in the state of Oregon. More diplomatic and experienced in politics than his naive predecessor (known as "Giveaway McKay" for his leasing of public lands to private interests), Seaton believed in President Eisenhower's "partnership" principle for resource management. This included, in the words of Elmo Richardson, a "deeply held conviction that the government should do only those things which the states and the people could not do for themselves." Compounding Seaton's problems was the announcement in 1958 by the Eisenhower administration that it wished to reduce funding for MISSION 66 by half; a situation that the Democratic U.S. Senate reversed, and instead increased by some 100 percent. Seeking compromise between what Richardson called the "intentions and reality" of national resource policy, Seaton eventually in 1960 called for "a 'Mission 66' whereby the Bureau of Land Management [BLM] could develop recreation sites, and a 'Mission 76' to provide federal assistance to the states for their own park and recreation programs."

The reasoned logic of Elmo Richardson, reflecting years later on the caution of the Eisenhower administration, did not suffuse the correspondence of SWR historian Robert Utley, whose task it was to survey the importance of Fort Davis for inclusion in Conrad Wirth's report to Congress. Disheartened not only by the dilatory tactics of Seaton, but by what he perceived to be the limited understanding of local interests in the machinations of Washington politics, Utley returned from his visit to Fort Davis in the fall of 1959 determined to change attitudes from the local to the national level about the abandoned post. In an interview years later with this author, Utley described the historical society's operation of Fort Davis as "real sleazy," especially the bohemian lifestyle of the artist-caretaker, Rodolfo Guzzardi, who seemed incapable of halting the vandalism that had increased over the years. "The locals didn't know how to promote Fort Davis," said Utley, and as for Barry Scobee: "He was full of the legends," and was "part of a network of west Texas historians [who told] half-real/half-mythic stories." The most odious of these tales that Utley and the NPS would confront was Scobee's "Indian Emily" story, reinforced by the prominence of the Texas Centennial Commission marker on the post grounds. Scobee, in Utley's words, "knew deep down that [the legend] was wrong," but their disagreement over its veracity did not keep the justice of the peace from assisting "the kid," as Scobee called the park service historian, in the collecting of documents and interviews.

Caught between parochial interests and national politics, Utley then took the boldest step that a public official can make. He orchestrated a secret campaign of support for the creation of a park at Fort Davis, fully aware of the consequences to his career as well as to the future of the site. Like many veterans of military service in the postwar era, Utley believed deeply in the importance of military history to the national story. He also shared the public's fascination with the West, having begun his career with the NPS at the age of 17 as a seasonal ranger at Custer Battlefield National Monument (renamed in 1991 as the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument).

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39 Richardson, Dams, Parks and Politics, 115, 189-90, 197-98.

Utley chafed at the constraints of bureaucracy, and knew that popular sentiment would override any intransigence on the part of his superiors. Evidence of this was the fact that 17 of the 26 highest-rated television shows that year were westerns, and the heroics of John Wayne as a soldier-scout, or cowboy, had regaled moviegoers since the premiere in 1939 of the film *Stagecoach*.

The regional historian's ally in this strategy of subterfuge was John Porter Bloom, assistant professor of history at Texas Western College in nearby El Paso. Bloom, the son of Lansing Bloom, longtime editor of the *New Mexico Historical Review* and himself a veteran of military service, had known Utley through their associations in the Westerners International (to which Ralph Yarborough belonged as well), and their membership in the Historical Society of New Mexico. In October 1959, the NPS advisory board had included Fort Davis "as a site possessing exceptional value for the purpose of commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States." Yet Utley had learned soon thereafter that Secretary Seaton was "adopting what appear to be a number of stalling devices to avoid releasing the recommendations of the Advisory Board and thus taking a positive stand on several issues." "Lord knows," said the NPS historian, "when it will be publicly announced that the Park Service wants Fort Davis." Aggravating matters for Utley was the fact that the local historical society "could almost certainly get one of the Texas congressmen or senators to introduce a bill in the next session of Congress authorizing creation of the Fort Davis National Historic Site." Utley predicted that "the man who would write the [NPS] report is a devoted champion of Fort Davis [a reference to himself]," and Seaton would be forced to "sign the report rather than, in effect, repudiate his own Advisory Board." He could not "start the ball rolling without getting myself into trouble," and SWR could not "let the Fort Davis supporters know how to break the log jam." Thus Utley asked Bloom "discreetly and without divulging your source [to] make the above facts known;" a service which "might well advance the cause of historic preservation in Texas a long, long way - and it has a long way to go."41

John Porter Bloom was as good as his word, engaging in an extensive campaign of correspondence throughout west Texas, and in Washington, DC, on behalf of Utley's request. Barry Scobee offered Bloom some background on previous attempts to create a national park at the site, remembering in January 1960 how Big Bend's appropriation had denied Fort Davis access to state funds for purchase of the post. Then World War II terminated all non-essential activities in Congress. "I have seen a dozen moves to buy the fort," said Scobee, "and we have always come out minus." Bloom also encouraged his own El Paso Historical Society to pass a memorandum in favor of Fort Davis. He went so far as to approach Senator Johnson, who in the winter of 1960 was the Senate majority leader and was contemplating his own candidacy for the presidency of the United States. Johnson asked Conrad Wirth to "give me your views and opinions, however tentative, on this . . . most interesting proposal." Representative Rutherford, now on the House subcommittee that oversaw the national parks, agreed to draft

legislation creating Fort Davis National Historic Site, and the NPS director could inform Senator Johnson on March 4: "We are undertaking further studies relative to Fort Davis to determine whether this Department should support the proposal to establish it as a national historic site."42

On February 10, 1960, Representative Rutherford introduced in the House his bill (HR 10352) to designate Fort Davis as a national historic site. In his letter to Representative Wayne N. Aspinall (D-CO), chairman of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Rutherford asked for help in "scheduling hearings on this bill as quickly as possible and convenient." He then detailed the significant historical features of the post, calling it "an important link between the East and the West of the United States." Fort Davis was also near Texas's "only National Park - Big Bend," and inclusion in the NPS system would "give [Fort Davis] added attraction in a historic area." Rutherford then drew attention to one of his favorite stories about the post: Indian Emily. Unaware of the thoughts of Robert Utley on this issue, Rutherford repeated to Aspinall the romantic story told time and again by his friend Barry Scobee: "Many visitors come to this grave and to review the Old Fort’s ruins, although no official designation has ever been given to the site by any governmental level."43

Within two weeks, Senator Yarborough had followed Rutherford’s lead in submitting Senate Bill (S.) 3078 to create the park at Fort Davis. In both cases the lawmakers instructed their colleagues to "set aside [Fort Davis] as an public national memorial to commemorate the historic role played by such fort in the opening of the West." Rutherford and Yarborough did depart from established congressional guidelines in requiring the Secretary of the Interior to "acquire, on behalf of the United States, by gift, purchase, condemnation, or otherwise, all right, title, and interest in and to such lands." Heretofore Congress had wanted all new parklands donated by private or non-federal entities. But early indications were that none of Rutherford’s and Yarborough’s peers would criticize this effort, and on March 15, 1960, Senator Yarborough had included in the Congressional Record an article from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram praising the work of Barry Scobee on Fort Davis. The park service also swung into action, designating Robert Utley in March to be the author of the historical report on Fort Davis. Utley, said Conrad Wirth, "will be familiar with this aspect of the task since he has performed similar work in connection with the studies of Fort Bowie

42Scobee to Bloom, January 17, 1960; Bloom to Scobee, January 30, 1960; Bloom to Lyndon Johnson, January 30, 1960; Rutherford to Bloom, February 2, 1960, John Porter Bloom File, FODA Library; Johnson to Wirth, February 15, 1960; Ernst to Johnson, March 4, 1960, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

and Apache Pass [in southeastern Arizona] and the report on Promontory Point [near Ogden, Utah] that is currently in progress."

This last remark about Robert Utley's workload indicated the volume of research outstanding on potential park sites; a situation that did not square with Secretary Seaton's cautious strategies about "partnerships" and local initiative. To that end, E.T. Scoyen, acting NPS director, informed the Office of the Solicitor that the Park Service, while supportive of Fort Davis's inclusion in the system, should not move as quickly in providing material to Congress. "It is the best remaining example in the Southwest of the typical post Civil War frontier fort," said Scoyen, but "we have not yet carried out studies needed to indicate what would be desirable boundaries of the proposed historic site in order to provide for protection and preservation of the site and its structures."

Hence the Park Service hoped for a modest delay, and expected that Utley's study "will be completed in time to permit a report to the Congress . . . before the end of this session." Rutherford, however, noticed a problem in April when "these kind of bills [began] having rough sledding on the Floor [of the House] this year." The west Texas congressman wrote to Barry Scobee on April 19: "Rather than take the bill up now in the mad scramble toward an early adjournment, and with tempers short, I had about decided to wait until the beginning of next session to push the Fort Davis bill on the theory that a 'good humored' House would be more receptive then."45

Robert Utley proceeded to Fort Davis soon after announcement of the delay in the site's progress through Aspinall's committee. Working hastily in the election year of 1960, Utley completed a draft of the Fort Davis report by May, and submitted it through channels in the Park Service. The regional historian made clear in the first section his intent for Fort Davis: "Its mission will be to recall vividly through the nostalgic atmosphere of a remarkably well preserved frontier army post the loneliness and frustration, the laughter and song, sorrow and tragedy, and the nomadic feeling of infantry and cavalry garrison life in the late 19th century." Utley marveled at the relatively slow process of deterioration at the site, which an aerial photograph in 1924 "revealed that all or portions of the entire fort as constructed were still standing although evidences of destruction were noticeable." He found that spring "seven quarried stone buildings [along officers' row] whose walls are intact and three of these have been maintained, reroofed, and are equipped for occupancy." His architectural summary

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44HR 10352, "A Bill Authorizing the establishment of a national historic site at Old Fort Davis . . .," February 10, 1960, 86th Congress, 1st Session; S. 3078, "A Bill Authorizing the establishment of a national historic site at Old Fort Davis . . . ," February 22, 1960, 86th Congress, 1st session; Congressional Record, March 15, 1960, A2271; Wirth to Region Three Director, March 1960, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC. The U.S. government began buying parkland in 1961 when the Kennedy administration purchased acreage for Cape Cod National Seashore in Massachusetts.

45Memorandum of E.T. Scoyen, Acting NPS Director, to Legislative Counsel, Office of the Solicitor, March 10, 1960; Ernst to Aspinall, April 12, 1960, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC; Rutherford to Scobee, April 19, 1960, Legislative Efforts (1961) File.
concluded: "The most striking difference between this site and others of the same general period and influence is the large extent of ruins remaining."\(^{46}\)

Turning to the work remaining before the site could open for business, Utley suggested that "the visitor to Fort Davis should respond to the mountain setting and become imbued with an interest in the extensive century old remains." He called for "stabilization of the remaining adobe ruins, restorations of at least some of the stone officers' quarters and other important buildings, replanting with trees and sod and installation of an authentic flagpole on the parade ground." Utley suggested that the visitor should also have access to a "small visitor center to accommodate exhibits associated with the fort and the accomplishments of the personnel garrisoned there," with "the main interpretive devices [being] in-place exhibits at appropriate locales accessible from hard-surfaced trails." Because the site and community were "practically contiguous," Utley saw no need for concession services. He did warn that "the Service will encounter adverse development across the highway from the fort," but this he believed would be "no worse than during the years when the fort was active." One could not easily stop "motels, service stations, lounges, curio shops, etc.," but these "will only tend to increase the atmosphere of non-commercialism within the proposed Service area."\(^{47}\)

The Fort Davis draft report circulated among Utley's contemporaries in other offices of the Park Service, including that of Kenneth Saunders, SWR architect. He joined a party of regional officials on a tour of Fort Davis in mid-June 1960, reporting on the cost of restoration work at the site. Saunders counted a total of 49 buildings and structures, comprising an "original architectural design" that he considered "not outstanding." In addition, "throughout the United States there are now many fine examples of this period of architecture that are still in excellent condition." He judged "the majority of the remaining buildings or structures at Fort Davis [to be] in poor condition far past the time for reconstruction or rehabilitation and are unsafe to walk around." Saunders called on the Park Service "to remove all old lumber (roof structures, stud walls, etc.) and exterior walls of adobe buildings." In their place he wanted "complete restoration of eight typical examples of the old buildings." His plan would cost some $273,500, and would provide the visitor with "a fine idea of old Fort Davis as originally built."\(^{48}\)

The Saunders report drew criticism immediately from Utley and others in the regional office, as it threatened further delay of final approval of Fort Davis. Erik Reed, SWR chief of interpretation, told the regional chief of operations that "if Fort Davis is

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\(^{46}\) Memorandum of Jerome C. Miller, Acting SWR Director, to the NPS Director, May 26, 1960; "Report on Proposed Fort Davis National Historic Site," n.d. 1960, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

\(^{47}\) Ibid.

\(^{48}\) Memorandum of Kenneth M. Saunders, SWR Architect, to the SWR Chief of Operations, June 29, 1960, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
added to the National Park System, it will be because of the historical significance of the post (and the buildings) rather than of the aesthetic values of the structures." Saunders' suggestion to dismantle buildings and tear down walls also irritated Reed, who preferred to "strengthen what remains by capping and/or re-roofing." The Saunders report thus triggered rapid responses from other study team members, and Roland Richert, the acting supervisory archeologist who had accompanied Saunders to Fort Davis, sided with Utley and Reed: "The review, advice, and recommendations of the Interpretive Branch with respect to any or all structures are considered essential for achieving maximum objectivity and accuracy in final appraisals and planning for the area."49

As the Saunders report drew fire within the regional office, the final version of Utley's "Area Investigation Report" for Fort Davis became available. In it the historian was much more thorough than he had been in the four-page synopsis submitted in haste in May. Utley remembered that in 1953 the region had assigned John Littleton to prepare a report entitled, "Frontier Military Posts of the Southwest." Littleton believed that Forts Davis, Union and Bowie offered the best evidence of the Indian wars fortifications. Because of its proximity to the SWR headquarters in Santa Fe, as well as that city's tourist trade, only Fort Union received favorable treatment from the park service as a result of the Littleton report. Utley conceded that Forts Union and Laramie already interpreted the Indian wars for the general public, making the costs of land purchase and building restoration at Fort Davis a challenge. Yet in its favor was the presence nearby of two major national parks: Carlsbad Caverns to the north, and Big Bend to the southeast. Utley expected Fort Davis to draw better than Fort Union (14,000 in 1959), but less than Fort Laramie (41,000 that year).50

Most critical to the success of Utley's plans was purchase of the 454-acre tract from Mrs. John Jackson and her family. The Fort Davis Historical Society was hard-pressed to generate much more than the $1,500 per year lease payment for the property, plus operating expenses. "None of the present uses would be consistent with Service policy," Utley concluded, as these encompassed not only the museum, rental quarters, and "curio shop," but also riding stables (with twelve horses grazing on the grounds), and a Church of Christ summer camp in Hospital Canyon. Utley suggested that the NPS offer to purchase about 440 acres from Mrs. Jackson, as a tract of 14.6 acres held "no historical or developmental value." "The only additional lands" that he could detect "would be the head of Hospital Canyon to assure scenic control and prevent a possible access problem to the 3 to 5 acres within the canyon owned by local landowner, H.E. (Dude) Sproul."51

49Erik K. Reed, SWR Chief of Interpretation, to SWR Chief of Operations, July 6, 1960; Memorandum of Roland Richert, Acting SWR Supervisory Archeologist, to the SWR Archeologist, July 11, 1960, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.


51Ibid.
It was when Utley examined the Jeff Davis County tax records that he learned of the variance between what Mrs. Jackson paid in taxes for the property, and what she wanted the federal treasury to reimburse her for the improvements on the land. "For the Assessor's office the assessed value is approximately 1/4 of true value," said the historian, which rendered "an approximate true value . . . in the neighborhood of $50,000." Utley could not estimate the cost of restoration, although the alterations made by private interests "do not appear to have wrought any irreparable damage to the integrity of the area." As for the loss of tax revenues on the property for Jeff Davis County, because Mrs. Jackson already paid so little in taxes, Utley believed that the modest decrease of county ($96.00), state ($50.40), and local school revenues ($240.70) "would almost certainly be compensated by an increase in business activity and by an resultant nominal increase in land values within the town of Fort Davis." 52

Upon receipt of Utley's report, the SWR director compiled a memorandum for the NPS director's use with Congress. Two problems surfaced that the regional office could not dismiss: the high cost of restoration, and the lack of unified local support for the park. "The question of restoration-rehabilitation-stabilization is certainly wide open for further consideration and discussion," said regional director Thomas J. Allen. "Should Fort Davis National Historic Site be authorized," the Park Service faced "costs for the first five years of operation . . . at $1,170,200, with an estimated annual recurring cost of $65,000 thereafter." Allen described as "somewhat controversial" the "relative value of the Jackson et al. property." The local historical society's purchase option of $115,000 expired on March 31, 1961, making its current value about $257 per acre. "Perhaps not pertinent, but at the same time somewhat startling in comparison," said Allen, "is the reported $30 to $50 per acre valuation of adjacent good grazing land; an amount only 11 percent to 20 percent of Mrs. Jackson's asking price. "We cannot anticipate [the Jacksons'] reaction should the appraised value be less than $257 per acre," said the SWR director, "although it is known they feel the property to be worth much more." What Mrs. Jackson hoped to accomplish in the sale to the park service was recapturing not only the $25,000 paid by her late husband to 'Mac' Sproul in 1946 for the property, but also "close to a quarter-million dollars" for "fencing, some restoration, the construction of facilities, utilities, and roads, and . . . losses suffered in such unprofitable ventures as a boy's camp." 53

As if money were not enough of an obstacle at Fort Davis, Allen reported to Washington headquarters that the study group, even though it spent only a short time in the "rather remote west Texas town of Fort Davis," learned that "no great or overwhelming amount of public interest in, or support of, the Fort Davis National Historic Site proposal was detected among the local population." Utley and his colleagues had heard rumors that "some confusion existed among some of the Fort Davis Historical Society members as whether they favored Federal or private ownership of the

52Ibid.

53Memorandum of Thomas J. Allen, SWR Director, to the NPS Director, July 27, 1960, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
fort area." While there were proponents like Barry Scobee, failure to achieve strong community backing would make the high cost and duplicative historical nature of the site hard to sell to Congress, unless changes occurred in Washington in the elections that November.54

One resident of Fort Davis who was not "confused" about the merits of federal spending in his adopted hometown was Barry Scobee, who pressed on with plans to promote the park with any means at his disposal. This extended in August 1960 to assisting Congressman Rutherford in preparing remarks on Fort Davis to a civic group in Odessa. Scobee had decided that his 40-page pamphlet on Fort Davis needed updating, and began the process that summer, which led him to reminisce about his work with Carl Raht and development of the legends of the Davis Mountains. The judge suggested that Rutherford speak about writing history in the area, especially since he had learned that Raht, now 80-years old, was "haunting the library" in Odessa in his efforts to revise his 1917 study of the region. This in turn led Scobee to speak of the Indian Emily story, as Rutherford wanted to recount the tale to the Odessa audience. "It was [Raht] who first put Indian Emily into print, so far as known," said Scobee, and "where he got it I have no idea." But the criticism of Robert Utley rankled the old history buff, and he claimed: "I have found material that gives the tale, apparently, sound backing." Yet Scobee had been chastened by the NPS skepticism towards his most cherished memory, and he confided in Rutherford: "If I ever see [Raht] again . . . I'll hold him down on the sidewalk with my foot till he tells me the truth about the story."55

Barry Scobee had more on his mind in the fall of 1960 than revenge upon Carl Raht for the Indian Emily story. As a longtime activist in the Jeff Davis County Democratic party, Scobee worked with others in the community to support the re-election of J.T. Rutherford to the U.S. Congress, and the national victory of John F. Kennedy as president, and Texas's own Lyndon B. Johnson as his vice-president. The Kennedy-Johnson ticket promised to "get the country moving again;" a reference to the quiescence that had set in during the latter years of the Eisenhower administration. Kennedy also had campaigned on a promise to restore American military prestige, supposedly "lost" as the United States and the Soviet Union bickered over who had more virtue in world affairs. All of this contentiousness led to a razor-thin margin of victory for Kennedy (a mere one-tenth of one percent), but Democratic control of both houses of Congress made Scobee and local sponsors of Fort Davis believe that their long-desire park could become part of Kennedy's "New Frontier."

In the intervening months between the election and the Kennedy inauguration, the Eisenhower Interior department decided to move the Fort Davis issue forward, but in a form that dissatisfied the incoming chairman of the House subcommittee on national parks, J.T. Rutherford. Fred Seaton informed the Odessa Democrat that Fort Davis was only "eligible for Registered National Historic Landmark status," not inclusion in the NPS system. "This is contrary to what I had been led to believe was the purpose of your

54Ibid.

investigation," the new chairman told Seaton on December 19, 1960, "and it seems to me that the time, money and effort spent in studying the project is simply wasted if the action of the Government is to be limited to the issuance of a certificate [standard procedure with landmark designations only] with no provision for improving or owning the site." Suggesting the Democrats' newfound clout in Washington, Rutherford told the outgoing secretary: "This is to notify you that I shall, immediately upon the convening of the 87th Congress, again introduce a bill on this subject." He reminded Seaton: "I withheld action on the [1960] bill . . . at the Department’s request until the study could be completed by your organization." The "lame-duck" decision by Interior rankled Rutherford, who warned Seaton: "This time I shall push for prompt enactment."36

Within two weeks, the Eisenhower appointees had vacated their offices in Washington, and the new Interior secretary, former Arizona Representative Stewart Udall, changed direction for the park service in general and Fort Davis in particular. Rutherford and Udall had been members of the House Interior committee, and the Texas congressman received on January 9, 1961, a notice from Interior that apologized for the "confusion" surrounding park status for the fort. In its haste to release names of potential sites to the public, the department had included Fort Davis in the category of national landmarks, but had not specified that "there is a very small number of these sites that are being considered for Federal ownership but are not publicized and announced as such in the press release." Landmark status "does not adversely affect in any way our desire to consider [Fort Davis] for Federal ownership," wrote assistant secretary George W. Abbott, who promised that park status "will be the subject of the Department’s report on your bill."37

As Rutherford pushed Interior to revise its thinking on Fort Davis, he continued to lay the groundwork for his bill, HR 566, to make the post a national historic site. In late December he informed Barry Scobee confidentially that he would speak personally with Kennedy and Johnson about the measure in the days prior to the start of Congress. To that end, Rutherford needed from Scobee "letters from the [county] tax assessor that he has no objection to the fort being taken off the tax rolls, and the same from the [county] commissioners and judge." All this action stimulated Scobee to complete his "Old Fort Davis" manuscript, and select a publisher to have the volume ready if and when Rutherford met with success in Washington. The judge also organized a meeting of the local historical society in early January to discuss the project, and they invited the superintendent of Big Bend, Stanley C. Joseph, to offer advice. As his predecessor, Lon Garrison, had done with the same group eight years earlier, Joseph spoke to "general legislative and budgetary processes" about the park service. The society then asked specifically "how application is made for registration of Fort Davis and who should make the application." Society members also wondered about the timing of such an

36Rutherford to Fred Seaton, Secretary of the Interior, December 20, 1960, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

37George W. Abbott, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, to Rutherford, January 9, 1961, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
application, in light of Rutherford’s plans for legislation that month. Inspiring this inquiry, said Joseph to the SWR director, were "several recent newspaper articles," one of which in the Alpine Avalanche included the cryptic comment from the congressman that "the Old Fort can be operated in such a manner by Department of Interior as ‘to be financially self-sustaining.’" Rutherford did not elaborate on how this might be accomplished, nor whether this promise was critical to passage of HR 566.58

Perhaps one reason for the congressman’s reference to the profitability of Fort Davis (in spite of the local historical society’s failure to raise enough monies to purchase it, let alone maintain the property) was the reaction in west Texas and other parts of the country to the election of perceived "liberals" like Kennedy and Johnson, and the sweep of the Congress by like-minded individuals. Rutherford became concerned by April 1961 that the person hired to manage the grounds for Mrs. Jackson, a Mr. George Westfall of California, belonged to the John Birch Society, an organization that opposed the expansion of federal power and taxation. The congressman asked Barry Scobee to investigate, and the judge told Rutherford: "It was news to me . . . that he was openly soliciting members." Upon reflection, Scobee conceded that Westfall was "just the type who would be doing that sort of thing," but also admitted: "There was no other person to hire . . . [since] nobody wants [the caretaker’s job] who can be satisfactory." The judge regretted that so soon after Kennedy’s victory local suspicion of government had reared its head. "A strange angle of things here," warned Scobee, "is that a lot of people supposed to be Democratic are voting GOP [Republican] . . . even some of my Demo committeemen." For the sake of local harmony (something that Rutherford needed as HR 566 wended its way through committee), Scobee asked him not to mail brochures condemning the "Birchers," as "it could react against you, and me too."59

Once Barry Scobee had begun to wonder about the propriety of Mrs. Jackson’s employee, he believed that he should inform Congressman Rutherford of the peculiarities of the managers of the tourist facilities of the society, Mr. and Mrs. Rodolfo Guzzardi. In an article in the San Angelo Standard Times (March 12), Scobee described them as artists (he from Florence, Italy, she from Georgia) "who have been here two years specializing in painting pictures of early-day transportation, specifically stage coaches and wagons." One of the paintings done by Mrs. Guzzardi was of Indian Emily’s grave, which Scobee described as "a creation of breath-taking beauty, with its granite and bronze marker, its pile of rocks and a lone mesquite sapling . . . all against a backdrop of colorful stone cliffs that shield the ancient post cemetery from the wailing winds." To the congressman, Scobee narrated a slightly different image (more akin to that of Robert Utley). "He [Rodolfo] is a crabbed, foreign, maestro, with national standing in his art work," said the judge, who "had offended so many people by his ungracious crabbedness that the executive committee of the Society wrangled a lot about giving the


lease on the Post." Yet like the Westfalls, "there was no one else for the job," and the Guzzardis did "lend an important, inviting atmosphere," as "outsiders, cultured people interested in Art, from Odessa and Midland, etc., rave over him." 60

Rutherford kept quiet the information provided him by Barry Scobee on the potential for controversy at the fort, pushing instead for his committee to consider the historic site legislation along with 126 similar measures. Senator Yarborough had also introduced a Fort Davis bill that winter (S. 862), which came before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. The committee chairman, Clinton P. Anderson (D-New Mexico), was like Yarborough a Democrat, a western history buff, and a close personal friend of Vice-President Johnson. Anderson requested of the Interior department information on the cost of purchasing and restoring the site, and learned in April that the NPS would need $115,000 to acquire the property from Mrs. Jackson. The park service then agreed to develop a five-year plan for Fort Davis, with total costs estimated at $1,055,000. This same report went to Wayne Aspinall's House Interior committee, and the Colorado Democrat announced hearings that month on Rutherford's request. Rutherford made one last request of Scobee that the Fort Davis Historical Society provide him with "a simple resolution of support," and then he could proceed with subcommittee action. 61

That action came quickly, as Rutherford wrote to Scobee in early May to ask that he come to Washington at the end of the month to testify in favor of HR 566. When Senator Yarborough learned that May 25 had been scheduled for House hearings, he prevailed upon Senator Anderson to place the Fort Davis measure on the Senate calendar for the following day. Scobee, who had neither flown in a plane before nor been to the nation's capital, traveled to Washington with Martin Merrill, representing the newly created "Highland Chamber of Commerce," based in Marfa, and Judge Gerald Fugit of Odessa. While in Odessa awaiting departure of their flight, Scobee and Merrill visited with Carl Raht, telling him of the last step on the journey for their dream of a park in the Davis Mountains. Once in Washington, Scobee and the park supporters were called to the House hearing room on the morning of May 25, where the venerable champion of Fort Davis read a twelve-minute prepared statement, along with remarks from NPS Director Conrad Wirth. At both the House and Senate hearings, Scobee reiterated themes and details that he had come to memorize over the years, and closed with an appeal to the nation's lawmakers: "Today people feel that the old fort, because it


symbolizes the courage, sacrifices, persistence, and the idealism of brave men and women on a wild frontier, should be perpetuated as a shrine to American history.\textsuperscript{62}

After thirty five years of telling the story of Fort Davis, Barry Scobee could take great satisfaction in the treatment he received in Washington, which included a gallery pass from Senator Yarborough allowing the judge to hear President Kennedy deliver a 45-minute speech to a joint session of Congress before his return to west Texas. Scobee put the finishing touches on his manuscript on the post, and learned on July 17 that HR 566 had been approved by the full House. Senator Yarborough then shepherded his measure through the Senate, which on August 29 concurred in the wisdom of the House. Gene Hendryx of radio station KVLF in Alpine then played a taped interview that day that he had conducted with his old Sul Ross college friend, which included several references to the hard work of Barry Scobee. The judge himself was concerned about the next phase of park creation: funding from Washington. He wrote to Rutheford "asking why couldn’t the House or Senate pass a resolution . . . to allow the NPS to use funds on hand to make the fort purchase and start work." His fear was that more buildings would collapse before Congress appropriated money from the next fiscal year budget (to begin on July 1, 1963), and he told his close friend Frank Temple from Lubbock: "[The] NPS better hurry if they want to preserve anything.\textsuperscript{63}

In the euphoria of Scobee, Rutherford, et al., consequent to passage of the Fort Davis legislation, they had been able to overlook the undercurrent of opposition in town toward creation of the park. On the day that Scobee testified in Washington before Rutherford’s committee, a reporter for the \textit{San Angelo Standard Times} came to Fort Davis to visit the post, and to interview Rodolfo Guzzardi about the importance of the pending legislation. While the artist approved of the action, he also warned that "the federal government will make too many changes on the post unless residents hold out for certain conditions." He told the reporter that "some government people suggest tearing down many of the old buildings because they are unsafe." Compounding the problem was the provincialism of the townspeople, who in the words of the Italian native "are blissfully ignorant of what "restoration" means."

Guzzardi cited as evidence of this the changes at the San Jose Mission in San Antonio, which he claimed to have painted in the 1930s. Fort Davis did need help, as Guzzardi said that "age, weather and vandalism have made a ruin of it." His great fear was the "prospect of tourists \textquotesingle driving 2,000 miles to see something loused up.\textsuperscript{64}

Guzzardi’s remarks were not as disturbing to Scobee and Rutherford as were those of Martin Merrill, who began a campaign disparaging the efforts of the Odessa


\textsuperscript{63}Scobee to Utley, July 29, 1961; Rutherford to Scobee, September 5, 1961; Scobee to Temple, September 6, 1961, Legislative Efforts (1961) File. Temple wrote his master’s thesis on Fort Davis.

Democrat even before President Kennedy had an opportunity to sign the legislation. Merrill, a Republican whom local residents marvelled would testify on behalf of the bill as he did, complained to his friends that Rutherford was "'hell bent' on spending federal money for the Fort." The congressman wrote confidentially to Scobee that the state's Republican senator, the newly elected John Tower, had shown no interest in the measure. Rutherford also reminded the judge that Merrill had offered to donate toward the purchase price the $2,500 raised by the historical society. "Now," said the congressman, "if [Merrill] wants to accept the responsibility of raising the funds by donation he is certainly at liberty to do so," given the language of the bill that "allows the raising of all funds to acquire the property without any federal monies being spent." Rutherford then hinted that Merrill's change of heart signalled the Republicans' strategy to oppose him in the 1962 elections, and he told Scobee: "I certainly appreciate your so completely filling me in on Merrill's political outlook and background so that I will know more about what to expect from him as the race approaches."65

Even as Rutherford and Scobee commiserated about the perennial nature of politics in Fort Davis's journey to park status, President Kennedy on September 8 signed Public Law 87-213, "An Act Authorizing the establishment of a national historic site at Fort Davis, Jeff Davis County, Texas." Citing the authority of Congress in 1916 that created the National Park Service, and the 1935 Historic Sites Act, the law called for "the Secretary of the Interior . . . to construct and maintain therein such markers, buildings, and other improvements and facilities for the care and accommodation of visitors, as he may deem necessary." Congress authorized the $115,000 purchase price sought by Mrs. Jackson, and limited the NPS to acquisition of no more than 460 acres of land, "together with any improvements thereon." This latter condition posed problems for early action on rehabilitation work, as Congress would not appropriate the funds prior to fiscal year 1963. Unless other means of acquisition surfaced, the site would be in legal abeyance until then.66

For the local sponsors of Fort Davis, the fall of 1961 was a time to give thanks, especially to those who fought so long for creation of the park. Martin Merrill wrote ten days after Kennedy's signing to Bish and Sally Tweedy, now in Rector, Pennsylvania, to thank them for their efforts a decade earlier. "Because it was due to your inspiration and energy that the Fort Davis Historical Society was founded," said the Tweedy's friend, "I am writing you to offer our sincerest regards." But plans for a celebratory picnic in October, concurrent with the 107th anniversary of the founding of the post in 1854, drew more political heat than Scobee had anticipated. Merrill, as society president, and R.D. McCready offered strong opposition at a meeting in September of the group planning the event. Scobee informed Rutherford: "They maintained that it would be better to wait until the post is dedicated as a National Historic Site to invite you

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66Public Law 87-213, "An Act Authorizing the establishment of a national historic site at Fort Davis, Jeff Davis County, Texas," September 8, 1961, 87th Congress, 1st session; Kenneth Holum, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, to Yarborough, November 16, 1961, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
and the Senator [Yarborough]." Making matters worse was a letter from Gene Hendryx to George Enloe of the society (whom Scobee identified as most likely a Republican) that offered Alpine's participation in any celebration, along with a warning that "it might not be wise to have both you and Mr. Yarborough at the same time, as 'politicians do not like to have their light dimmed by two being present at the same time.'" Scobee himself expressed some dissatisfaction with Hendryx, whom the judge suspected of "becoming politically interested in a state Rep. [representative] job," and with the community of Alpine, which "has done nothing, beyond well wishing, in the fort project."67

Embarrassed by the political skirmishing at the historical society meeting (Scobee called it "a little war out in the sticks"), Mrs. Lucy Miller expressed her own displeasure at the partisan stance taken by Merrill, and called for a picnic on October 24. At that time, she said, "'It is right and a must that public acknowledgement be extended to Mr. Rutherford in person.'" Some 200 hundred guests arrived that evening at the Prude Guest Ranch, with none other than Martin Merrill as master of ceremonies. Big Bend Superintendent Stanley Joseph represented the park service at the picnic. Congressman Rutherford was in attendance, while Senator Yarborough had to decline the invitation to appear because he was in Africa on military reserve duty. Rutherford gave Scobee a copy of the original Fort Davis bill, along with "the pen used by President Kennedy in signing the bill into law." The judge then presented to Rutherford a plaque, made from a piece of board found on the post grounds, and adorned with iron nails used in "'the last structure erected on the post, a quartermaster warehouse put up by the 3rd Cavalry in 1885.'" The guests then dined on barbecue, and left with a sense that the history of their town and its surroundings would change once again with the arrival of the National Park Service in their midst.68

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67Merrill to Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Tweedy, Rector, PA, September 18, 1961; Scobee to Rutherford, September 14, 1961, Legislative Efforts (1961) File.

CHAPTER FOUR

Shaping a Visible Past:
The Five-Year Plan of Historic Preservation,
1961-1966

The signing in September 1961 of legislation creating Fort Davis National Historic Site constituted the first half of the journey for revitalization of the abandoned military post. Before Lady Bird Johnson could grace the platform at the dedication ceremonies in 1966, NPS officials and supporters labored for five years to develop strategies for restoration of buildings, hire staff, implement policies and guidelines, and convince the surrounding community of the importance of park service programs to their lives. For Fort Davis, the historic site had not only the backing of many political sponsors, but also the good timing that Michael Kammen found critical to park survival in the 1960s. "Between 1961 and 1979," said the historian of American cultural memory, "the federal government became principal sponsor and custodian of national traditions." Yet within these two decades, "[there] began a process of fiscal and administrative retrenchment that has continued ever since."¹

Such considerations were on the minds of park service personnel throughout the five years dedicated to the planning and implementation of the $1 million restoration and stabilization program at Fort Davis. They and their local partners in west Texas knew only too well of concerns about the coercive power of the federal government, not to mention its taxes and regulatory demands. The NPS also had to contend with national forces in the first half of the tumultuous decade of the 1960s: race, ethnicity, antiwar sentiment, and growing disaffection with the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, whose support of Fort Davis had made its high level of funding possible. Yet the chance to work on a park that Franklin Smith, superintendent from 1965-1971, called the "last of the old parks," because of its "touch of the romantic," proved spellbinding for NPS officials eager to work on the story of the frontier West and its Indian wars.²

Even before the arrival in Fort Davis late in 1962 of the first superintendent, Michael Becker, the Park Service and its parent, the Interior department, learned of the expectations and controversy that the historic site would generate throughout the first thirty five years of its existence. A "Miss Virginia M. Stallings" wrote to the Senate sponsor of the park legislation, Ralph Yarborough, in November 1961 to complain about a rumor that she had heard about waste in the Park Service. Miss Stallings asked the whether NPS planned to "entertain proposals to demolish any of the historic structures comprising Fort Davis." This was in addition to a story that Interior sought to "expend $3,000,000 for a grass growing project in the desert [she did not say where]." John A. Carver, assistant secretary of the Interior, thus had to release the first of many letters of correction to critics of the NPS. Carver informed Senator Yarborough that not only did the Park Service not intend to destroy the buildings at Fort Davis (nor grow grass in the

¹Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 610.
²Interview with Franklin G. Smith, El Paso, TX, September 9, 1994.
desert), but that "it has been our experience frequently that after the Congress has authorized the establishment of a new unit of the National Park System rumors of various sorts, often unfounded, are circulated."³

More thorough was the inquiry of Dale Walton, state editor for the *San Angelo Standard-Times*, who asked SWR's Erik Reed in March 1962 to provide information about the status of the park. Walton apologized for not knowing more about the plans of the Park Service, and reminded Reed that "we have a prime interest in the fort and the town and would like to get started with stories on work there." Reed sent Walton a copy of Bob Utley's 1960 "area investigation report," and noted that until the NPS purchased the land from Mrs. Jackson, "I cannot give you a precise forecast of future activities at Fort Davis." The regional chief of interpretation did, however, reveal that the park service had asked Congress to include in its fiscal year 1963 budget $395,026, which "would provide for the purchase of the property and for staffing the area with essential personnel." In addition, the SWR could then "launch the first year's work on stabilization and restoration of the historic structures, and begin the construction of roads and trails, visitor center (museum and park headquarters building), employee residences, and utility structures." Construction would be designed and managed by the NPS, but private firms would receive the contracts for the actual work. Reed did not anticipate charging admission fees (one of Walton's queries), as it was not NPS policy to do so "at areas of the size and character of Fort Davis." The regional office, however, "would appreciate receiving copies of any articles [Walton] may write on Fort Davis," and Reed looked forward to working with the San Angelo paper in the promotion of the newest park in west Texas.⁴

Curiosity and confusion about Fort Davis reached the highest levels of the park service that same week in March 1962 when Frank Masland, a member of the Interior Secretary's Advisory Board from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, wrote to his friend "Connie" (Conrad) Wirth, NPS director, about his recent trip to the Davis Mountains. Echoing a sentiment of many easterners, Masland found the area "beautiful," and thought that "they would probably qualify as a National Park." But in his "humble opinion, Old Fort Davis doesn't qualify for anything." As a staunch conservationist, Masland considered the stone and adobe structures to be "a mongrel bunch," and "it would appear that some of them are being lived in." He then criticized the elaborate plans made for Fort Davis: "The lay of the land is such that if with a considerable expenditure of money buildings could be restored and/or stabilized and the place cleaned up, there would, I think, be little visitation and less reason for it." Wirth's friend then suggested that "it would not be simple to lay out a program for visitors," since "the buildings are scattered over too

³John A. Carver, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, to Yarborough, November 22, 1961, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

⁴Dan Walton, State Editor, *San Angelo Standard-Times*, to Erik Reed, SWR Chief of Interpretation, March 19, 1962; Reed to Walton, March 30, 1962, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
wide an area." Instead Masland hoped "that if there is public pressure for Service
acquisition it can be resisted."5

The bluntness of Masland's letter required a diplomatic response from the NPS
director, who thanked him for his "views" and could "appreciate that in [Fort Davis']
present condition it may not have impressed you favorably." Wirth expected that passage
of the 1963 park service appropriation bill "will provide funds for land acquisition there
and some money to begin a program of stabilization of the structures and ruins." The
director then hoped that Masland would "change your mind about Fort Davis when you
see it again . . . after we have had a chance to improve conditions there." Wirth saw
in Fort Davis "a long and fascinating history in the story of the southwestern frontier."
The park service stood committed to "bring this out in our development," and he took
pride in the fact that "the people in Texas are enthusiastic over the prospects."6

The long-awaited congressional funding arrived in October 1962, which permitted
the NPS to approach Mrs. Jackson with an offer to purchase her property. When Barry
Scobee received word of this action, he wrote to Conrad Wirth in December 1962 asking
advice about the promise made by the Fort Davis Historical Society (FDHS) to contribute
whatever funds it had towards the acquisition of park land. The amount stood at some
$5,000, and Scobee wondered if this could be applied to another project since Congress
would now meet Mrs. Jackson's quote. What the venerable historian of the Davis
Mountains sought was use of the money to publish his manuscript on Fort Davis and the
surrounding territory. Wirth considered it "an advantage to have a book on Fort Davis,
such as yours, available for the public as soon as possible after the historic site is
established." The park service would be several years away from producing its own text
on Fort Davis. To that end, Wirth instructed SWR's Bob Utley "to assist [Scobee] in
any way possible if you have any questions concerning format or historical procedures
in publications."7

Appropriation of Fort Davis monies in late 1962 also permitted the park service
to advance the work of Bob Utley along two tracks: the development of the historic
structures report (so that construction could begin the following spring); and the
collection of historic data for use in the new museum and visitors center complex (itself
the target of early construction work). Michael Becker remembered how Utley's
professionalism influenced the quality of the work. Utley, in Becker's words, was "very
thorough," and provided the superintendent much "useful information." Becker had
come to the park from his first superintendency at Tumacacori National Monument in
Arizona. He had never heard of Fort Davis, but realized soon thereafter that a

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5Frank Masland, Carlisle, PA, to "Connie" (Conrad Wirth), March 21, 1962, RG79, NPS, FODA
Files, Denver FRC.

6Wirth to Masland, April 2, 1962, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

7Fort Davis Historical Society (FDHS) Notes, October 7, 1962, FODA Library; Scobee to Wirth,
December 5, 1962; Wirth to Scobee, January 14, 1963, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
Figure 17. Superintendent Michael Becker and Barry Scobee reviewing Master Plan (1963). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
combination of regional and Texas political interest in the site made it a special place. Becker would later call Fort Davis his "best job in 30 years in the park service," in part because of its high profile and because of the chance to build a park from the ground up. In addition, the lack of new park formation in the 1950s had meant few career moves for park rangers. By 1960, said Becker, 80 percent of rangers had "hit their peak." Fort Davis allowed him to move upward from Tumacacori, and he knew at the time that "few superintendents get that experience [where] everything jelled."8

One reason that "everything jelled" at Fort Davis was the unification of historical research by Bob Utley, both for the historic structures and the visitors center/museum complex. In the summer of 1962, Utley combed the files of the National Archives in Washington to prepare both documentary and photographic evidence of the existence of the old military post. Thomas J. Allen, Utley's boss at SWR, informed the chief architect of the park service's Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC) that Utley had run into delays because of the distinctive nature of Fort Davis research. "The guidelines for preparing historic structures reports were designed for the problem of a single building," said Allen in September 1962. Fort Davis compounded this situation because "we have more than fifty historic buildings or sites of buildings, about half of which are represented by standing structures or remnants of structures." Utley had also discovered that "the documentary material on Fort Davis located in the National Archives has significant gaps that complicate the task of preparing the historic structures report." For these reasons, Allen suggested that Utley travel to San Francisco to discuss the Fort Davis plan with Charley Pope the historical architect of WODC, and then to write his draft based upon the linkage of the concerns of the NPS' architectural and historical offices.9

Upon Utley's return to Santa Fe from consultations with San Francisco NPS officials, he realized that Fort Davis' lack of staff and management would hinder standard park service strategies for supervision of construction work (especially given the project's isolation from other NPS sites, and the high volume of work to be undertaken). In addition, Utley had not completed all his own historical research for the museum. James M. Carpenter, acting SWR director, told WODC officials in November 1962 that work needed to begin as soon as practicable on the overhanging porches to protect the facilities on officers' row, but that private contractors could not be left alone on site to complete the task, for fear that "it would not be given the consideration that the historic structures deserve." Sanford Hill, chief of WODC, added to the sense of urgency by noting that "our plan for the Southwest Region this year consists entirely of the work at Fort Davis." He wanted to transfer to Fort Davis on or about January 1, 1963, a staff architect to oversee plans for "immediate support and shoring of walls, roofs and grounds to preclude further deterioration." Such a person could then prepare additional historic

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8Interview with Michael Becker, Santa Fe, NM, October 21, 1994.

9Memorandum of Thomas Allen, SWR Director, to Chief Architect, NPS Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC), San Francisco, CA, September 7, 1962, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
structures reports for later phases of stabilization, "supervise any necessary Day Labor and Contract work," and draw blueprints for "reconstruction of the Barracks Building No. [20] which probably will be restored as a Visitor's Center and Administration Building." The fact that Fort Davis had $40,000 available for construction work appealed to Allen and Hill, and the two discussed how to move the project forward without having to send everything to the central office in Washington.10

The arrival of Utley’s reports in regional and WODC offices allowed its supervisors to comment upon the unconventional strategies suggested for such a park as Fort Davis. A. Clark Stratton, assistant director for design and construction in Washington, praised Charley Pope’s original concept of overhanging porch roofs. "The proposal to protect the buildings surrounding the parade ground by means of limited restoration consisting of new roof structures and porches which will return the buildings to their original image," Stratton told the SWR director, "is considered here to be a desirable and welcome departure from past practices." Robert Utley remembered Pope’s design as "revolutionary and brilliant," especially in light of Region III’s focus on archeology over history. Stratton also declared Utley’s report an "excellent . . . framework for consideration of the treatment of Fort Davis as a whole." Stratton’s only reservation was the call for rehabilitation of the post hospital, which he saw as "not as defensible as are the other proposed restorations." Roy Appleman, Washington office (WASO) staff historian, concurred in Stratton’s judgments, calling the hospital "a major financial undertaking, together with its subsequent furnishing and maintenance." Appleman favored "retaining the hospital as a ruin, giving it treatment similar to other buildings of this character in the Fort area." The WASO historian then went beyond Stratton’s comments to suggest that the visitors center (which he agreed should be housed in the barracks building) be modeled upon Homestead National Monument, in Beatrice, Nebraska. Homestead had "large wall historical murals which reflect the theme for the place." A staff historian could be dispatched to Homestead, said Appleman, to devise a similar depiction for the visitors center at Fort Davis.11

Throughout the spring of 1963, NPS devoted more attention to the implementation of the design plans crafted by Bob Utley, Charley Pope, and others of the park service. When Superintendent Michael Becker reported for duty on January 6, 1963, he faced the need for employee housing, although he only had funds that winter for an historian and a supervisory park ranger. The slots for secretary and maintenance chief would soon follow. Because of the limited housing availability in Fort Davis (described by SWR director Thomas Allen as "sub-standard"), and the need to have some custodial personnel

10Memorandum of James M. Carpenter, Acting SWR Director, to Chief, WODC, November 15, 1962; Memorandum of Sanford Hill, Chief, WODC, to SWR Director, November 30, 1962; Allen to Chief, WODC, December 11, 1962, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

11Memorandum of A. Clark Stratton, Assistant NPS Director, Design and Construction, to SWR Director, February 26, 1963; Roy E. Appleman, NPS Staff Historian, to Chief, NPS Division of History and Archeology, March 12, 1963, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC. The hanging-porch design became known as a model for historic preservation within the Park Service regarding the placement of roofs on ruins.
on or near the grounds at all times, the park service agreed to design employee housing in the spring of 1963. Becker and his wife had chosen to take a rental on the Mexican east side of Fort Davis; a situation that raised eyebrows among the Anglo establishment of the town. More challenging to the status quo, and an indication of the impact that the park service would have on community sentiments, was Becker’s attendance at the Catholic church, making he and his wife the only Anglo parishioners that anyone could remember.12

This action by Becker came at a time when the community of Fort Davis struggled to understand the type of individual coming to work at the park, and also the lifestyles that they had cultivated in areas more urban than the Davis Mountains. Becker recalled that his offer of a secretarial position to Etta Koch was accepted immediately, as she had worked for 13 years in the office of Big Bend National Park. The superintendent had little control of one hire: that of the historical architect, Charles Woodbury, assigned to Fort Davis by the San Francisco WODC. Woodbury proved to be a most colorful character; perhaps too colorful, in the words of Bob Utley and other park service officials working on the design of the site. Woodbury had been divorced, had brought to the strict Protestant community a girlfriend with whom he lived, and suffered from alcoholism. Erwin Thompson, Becker’s first hire as an historian at the post, remembered that Woodbury had to leave Fort Davis within five weeks of his arrival because of an incident in town one night. After drinking too much liquor (which was hard to procure in a "dry" town like Fort Davis), Woodbury drove down the main street of town at midnight, and then onto a sidewalk. The local sheriff had to arrest Woodbury, incarcerate him overnight, and contact the park to have the architect released on bond. When Thompson went down to the courthouse to inquire about Woodbury, the sheriff noted with some amusement that the NPS employee had been the "first white man ever kept in the local jail."13

Where the arrest of Charles Woodbury within weeks of the arrival of NPS staff surprised the local community, the hiring by Michael Becker of Pablo Bencomo as the first chief of maintenance demonstrated that a new social order had come to Fort Davis. The position would be one of great importance to the park service, as the maintenance chief would have to hire and train workers able to meet NPS policy guidelines that exceeded most of the criteria for electrical, plumbing, carpentry, and stone work of the surrounding area. In addition, the park service would pay national wage scales, offer opportunities for training and promotion, and perhaps most important, would pay health and vacation benefits not usually offered by local ranchers and contractors. Interviews with Bencomo’s co-workers 30 years later revealed the depth of their respect for his abilities, and for his courage in challenging the racial barriers in Fort Davis. Bencomo, a war veteran and, in the words of seasonal ranger John Mitchell, "the best carpenter in

12Michael Becker interview, October 21, 1994; Memorandum of Allen to NPS Director, March 29, 1963, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

13Michael Becker interview, October 21, 1994; Superintendent’s Monthly Reports, February, March, April 1963.
100 Shaping a Visible Past: The Five-Year Plan of Historic Preservation

town," had applied for the position after reading about it in the local newspaper. Once
Bencomo became the maintenance chief, said Becker in his first monthly report as
superintendent, local Hispanic workers poured into his office seeking employment.
"There were at least ten to twenty men for each position on the initial [maintenance]
crew," Becker wrote in January 1963, and he attributed this successful canvassing of the
community to the presence of Bencomo, whom Becker himself described as "the local
contractors' top hand."14

With good staff and maintenance workers on site, Becker could then discuss with
regional and WODC personnel the first phase of actual construction: the six adobe
buildings along Officers' Row. Becker agreed with Pope that the best technique would
be to place "bond beams" around the roof of each structure upon which to hang the
porches. The construction firm of Hal K. Showalter, of Midland, Texas, was thus
awarded the first large restoration contract at Fort Davis, to the tune of $59,000.
Unfortunately, another bidder, the Robert L. Guyler Company of Lampasas, Texas,
protested the award, forcing Becker and the regional office to investigate. Guyler
eventually received the "roofs and porches" contract, and the first of many construction
crews descended upon Fort Davis to begin the million-dollar project to revive the
historical past. Soon thereafter, Becker sought to initiate work on the visitor
center/museum complex, but realized that this would take some 15,000 adobes (which
were not readily available in the Fort Davis area). Becker remembered from his days
at Tumacacori of the adobe makers in the Tucson area, but learned that "the freight rates
[from Arizona or New Mexico] make the importation of stabilized adobes . . .
impractical and financially objectionable." Thus he asked the regional office for
permission to manufacture the mud bricks on site; a situation that would delay work on
the visitors center until the fall of 1964 at the earliest.15

Adobe construction in the Fort Davis area, while common in the nineteenth
century, had given way to stonemasonry or frame construction. Thus the regional office
expressed concern about the request, especially in light of criticisms of the technique of
"stabilizing" the mud brick with concrete injected into the adobe before drying. One
concern of WODC was the fact that the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), which would
insure any structures at Fort Davis, wanted assurances that the bricks would not melt
before agreeing to underwrite a 30-year loan. Jerry A. Riddell, chief architect for
WODC, wanted Superintendent Becker to conduct his own tests on the bricks made
on-site, looking for their reaction to "compressive strength, shear, and resistance to

14Michael Becker interview, October 21, 1994; Superintendent's Monthly Reports, January 1963; Pablo

15Superintendent's Monthly Reports, May, August, November 1963; Memorandum of Becker to SWR
Director, August 22, 1963, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
Becker had ordered adobes made in Presidio, Texas, but Riddell wondered if they could endure the demands of park service visitors and maintenance standards.16

By the end of the first summer of operations at Fort Davis, Superintendent Becker had a good idea of the scale of work to be done in restoration of the historic buildings, as well as the development of a network of utilities and park service structures for the daily activities of the site. In March 1963, the SWR had completed its "five-year plan" for Fort Davis, calling for accurate and thorough attention to historical detail in all work. Superintendent Becker reported in August that criticism had already begun about the ambitious and costly program for the site, noting that "a rather conservative Australian visitor walked into HB [Historic Building] #2, and before saying Hello he blurted out, 'I certainly wouldn't vote for a senator who would appropriate $1,000,000 for a place like this.'" Becker and his staff understood this type of comment, as the regional, San Francisco, and Washington offices devoted what seemed to be an inordinate amount of attention to the details of the master plan. One example was the decision by the regional director, Thomas J. Allen, to locate the paved entrance road through the cottonwood grove to a parking area south of the planned visitors center. Allen and the NPS planners also wanted the housing compound placed next to the maintenance yard, creating problems of privacy for employee families and requiring landscaping along the highway to camouflage the non-historic structures (which originally were to be made of adobe).17

Whatever the degree of higher-level NPS control of Fort Davis planning, Superintendent Becker and his staff could not be influenced by such comments. They instead moved to address questions of worker and visitor safety, water supply, and electric power. One request made by the superintendent was "the reestablishment of the dike system which was initiated during the Army days at Fort Davis." The new historic site, like the old military post, needed protection from drainage down from Hospital canyon. A series of lateral canals would carry water away from the new buildings, and would "control and prevent accelerated erosion of the lands of the Park Service." Water supply and use also concerned the superintendent, who discussed the issue at some length in October 1963 with D.W. Geisinger of the WODC. Geisinger had studied the options at the park service's disposal relative to the site's access to potable water. He concluded that "a water supply providing a steady supply of 3 gpm [gallons per minute] or 9 gpm based on an 8 hour demand day will satisfy domestic future water demand for the next 20 years." At that time the park utilized a well some 300 feet west of the officers quarters, and Geisinger reported the existence of "another well believed to be a good source of water . . . located next to the old church camp site near the head of Hospital Canyon." These wells, if drilled deep enough, could supply Fort Davis with sufficient

16Memorandum of Jerry A. Riddell, Chief Architect, WODC, to FODA Superintendent, September 30, 1963, Administrative History Files, FODA Library.

Figure 18. HB-2 (Ranger’s Office) with storm damage (May 1963). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.

Figure 19. Front view of HB-2 (Ranger’s Quarters) (April 1963). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Chapter Four

water for staff, park maintenance, and the new compound of employee housing under consideration, as well as Geisinger's projection of 100,000 visitors annually by 1985.18

When Becker approached local utility companies for advice on the water system, as well as electrical power, they did not show much enthusiasm for working with the park service guidelines that required underground routing of pipes and wiring. The distance from the reservoir to the central buildings of Fort Davis also presented problems of cost, as WODC wanted a six-inch water line run underground. Above-ground construction would not only require less labor, but maintenance would be easier. The historic character of the post would be affected adversely, however, with visible power lines and electrical wires; a situation that Becker suggested could be mitigated if NPS built "spur lines for the installation of the fire hydrants and hose houses behind the various buildings on both sides of the parade ground." In similar fashion the park service could install additional electric transformers behind the historic structures to limit the need for an elaborate wiring grid exposed to public view.19

On the heels of Geisinger's water and power report for WODC came Ronald F. Coene of the U.S. Public Health Service in Dallas. On April 2, 1964, Coene visited with Superintendent Becker and his chief ranger, Robert "Bob" Dunnagan, to draft the site's first "environmental health survey." Having had the experience of one year's construction work and visitation (a total of 64,321 persons from January to December 1963), Coene expressed satisfaction with conditions as he found them that spring. He noted that of the six permanent and 12 seasonal employees, only one lived on the grounds (in one of the officers' quarters). Renovation of the various historic structures would provide "only for protection against the elements and will not be used to house anyone, nor will visitors be able to enter them." Coene did warn against the presence of polluted water in wells around the historic site, given the lack of sewage treatment in the Fort Davis area, and he advised Becker to install chlorine treatment equipment as soon as possible. He also suggested abandoning the traditional practice of draining sewage into cesspools, as these would only negate the impact of the chlorination. The public health officer's findings validated the concerns of Superintendent Becker, whose discovery of coliform bacteria in the park's water supply had required him to accelerate the planned 1966 environmental survey to address the real threat to staff and visitors.20

The historic structures rehabilitation moved forward quickly in the spring and summer of 1964, drawing much praise from local visitors who marveled at the extent of park service design and construction. Thomas N. Crellin, the historical architect who replaced the controversial Charles Woodbury, prepared a series of reports that

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18 Memorandum of Becker to SWR Director, August 12, 1963; Memorandum of D.W. Geisinger, Project Supervisor, WODC, to Chief Engineer, WODC, October 31, 1963; Geisinger, "Water System Design Summary Fort Davis National Historic Site," April 1, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

19 Memorandum of Becker to Chief, WODC, March 30, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

20 "Environmental Health Survey Fort Davis National Historic Site, Fort Davis, Texas," April 2, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC; Superintendent's Monthly Reports, March 1964.
Figure 20. Early staff (left to right: Bob Dunnagan, Erwin Thompson, Tom Crellin, Etta Koch, Michael Becker (Superintendent), and Pablo Bencomo) (1963). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
commented at length on the original plans and specifications. In May 1964, Crellin offered his advice on the status of rehabilitation work, based upon the same 12-month experience that D.W. Geisinger and Ronald Coene had used to craft their reports on water and power. The first winter of visitation and park service habitation at the site revealed the need for better heating, especially use of oil and electric heat, rather than the first estimate that butane gas would be sufficient. This would then require more heating ducts and redesign of ceilings and walls to accommodate the new piping. Crellin also warned against too much reliance on wooden flooring, as the weight of visitors crossing them could wear them out earlier, thus costing even more money in maintenance and repair.

The historic architect saved his most pointed comments for the process of adobe brick construction underway at the site. "I would question the use of stabilized soil as a surfacing material for the porches," said Crellin. "Judging from the quality of the soil-cement blocks produced here," Crellin told his superiors in Washington, "I doubt that a surface of sufficient hardness could be produced to hold up over an extended period of time." The historic architect conceded that stabilized soil "is used for road surfacing and is placed with optimum moisture content and maximum density." He countered with the argument that "foot traffic tends to follow definite patterns and to concentrate particularly at openings, resulting in severe localized wear." Crellin instead opted for "an integrally colored concrete slab" to "give the same general appearance;" a circumstance in keeping with NPS historic preservation policy since "a soil-cement mixture would require a color additive also." From this would come "a better surface," as "most of the commercial coloring agents contain a surface hardener."21

The NPS western office of design and construction then weighed in with their comments on the progress of rehabilitation in June 1964, as the fiscal year drew to a close and funding for 1965's activities drew near. Daniel B. Beard, SWR director, wrote to WODC that month to declare that the pace of work indicated a completion date sometime in fiscal year 1967. In order to meet that deadline, Beard's staff needed to rethink certain assumptions about work and funding. One area of concern had become the post hospital (HB46), which in the original master plan had been targeted for "complete restoration" at a cost of $57,000. The SWR director reminded the chief of WODC that "the Washington office questioned the desirability of completely restoring the hospital," while SWR and park personnel "thought the money might better be used to reconstruct the cavalry and quartermaster corrals." Beard reiterated the opinion of his staff that "this alternative would be a much less ambitious project, [and] would afford additional features of a side of the parade ground not well represented by historic remains and thus visually out of balance." In addition, this shift of funds "would provide a place to house large display items such as the ambulance recently acquired." The hospital

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Figure 21. Superintendent Michael Becker at HB-30 (Guardhouse) restoration (September 1964). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.

Figure 22. Commissary restoration (HB-21) (1960s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 23. Ruins of HB-21 (Enlisted Men’s Barracks) (August 1964). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.

Figure 24. HB-9 (Officers’ Quarters) (August 1964). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 25. Scaffolding for masonry work on HB-46 (Post Commissary), (September 1966). Courtesy Bob Crisman.

Figure 26. Military Cemetery (September 1966). Courtesy Bob Crisman.
Figure 27. Construction of employee housing campground with Mission 66 funds (1965). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.

Figure 28. Repointing stone on chapel foundation (November 1967). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 29. Chapel stabilization work (October 1968). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS

Figure 30. Wall collapsing at HB-46 (Hospital, July 1967). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 31. Demolition of private museum operated by Fort Davis Historical Society (1966). Courtesy of Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 32. View of two-story officers' quarters across parade ground through window of Hospital Steward's Building (1960). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 33. Restoration of freight wagon wheel (1960s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.

Figure 34. Excavation of Cistern behind HB 7 (Commanding Officer's Quarters) (1960s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
could then be "roofed and porched in the same manner as the officers quarters," resulting in financial savings and more rapid completion of the overall rehabilitation of the post.\textsuperscript{22}

The regional director's thoughts on the hospital prompted Superintendent Becker to begin a process of discussion about the facility that would endure for the next three decades at Fort Davis. He concurred in Beard's suggestion that the post hospital not receive such elaborate treatment as first planned. Funds saved from the hospital project should be redirected to the "restoration of the quartermaster corral," as this would generate storage and display space for the historic artifacts being acquired. The structures around the corrals would also "fit into the interpretive picture much better." Becker then turned to another building included in the master plan: the post chapel. "Since my arrival here," said the superintendent, "I have given considerable thought to the parade ground illusion of 1880, and while I did not feel at first that the chapel should be restored, I feel strongly, both from a local public relations standpoint and from the visitor's visual standpoint, that the chapel should be reconstructed." The superintendent wanted "essentially the same type of thing that we have on Officers' Row -- an exterior restoration only." Becker envisioned only rebuilding the four walls, which would not require "extreme expense." He also believed that "the visual picture would be improved a great deal if we were to do an exterior reconstruction."\textsuperscript{23}

Nagging at Superintendent Becker in the winter of 1964-1965 was the sense that the original enthusiasm for rehabilitation at Fort Davis had slowed. On January 28, 1965, he and SWR historian William "Bill" Brown coauthored a memorandum to the regional director criticizing what they considered the "bogging down" of the five-year plan. Two factors contributed to this process of delay: "insistence by WODC that the strict letter of the Historic and Prehistoric Structures Handbook be followed without variation or reasonable compromise;" and the "assignment by WODC of the Fort Davis architect to other projects." Becker and Brown painted for the SWR director "a grave picture in terms of area development for visitor use and enjoyment, and a huge carryover of unobligated funds" resulting from the slowdown. As evidence they cited the inability of architect Crellin to complete his design for HB7, the commanding officer's quarters, which they described as "the key structure in Officers' Row, which, in turn, is the core of the site and the prime visitor attraction." Crellin had to spend two days per week at Big Bend National Park, and Fort Davis had other reports needed from Crellin prior to commencement of construction. Compounding this was WODC's demand that each structure have its own report prepared, despite the similarity of work planned for each building along Officers' Row. Becker and Brown predicted that, "in the long run, [this]

\textsuperscript{22}Memorandum of Daniel B. Beard, SWR Director, to Chief, WODC, June 11, 1964, Administrative History Files, FODA Library.

\textsuperscript{23}Memorandum of Becker to SWR Director, June 25, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
would mean many years' delay in completing this superficial and simple job" of "installation of historic doors, windows, shutters, and porch railings."  

If the construction crews at Fort Davis had to halt their work on procedural grounds, Becker and Brown warned that visitors would see not "an operating historic site" but "one shambling indefinitely through the scrap-lumber of becoming." This would inevitably raise questions of expenditure of public funds. The report noted that Fort Davis had already fallen behind in fiscal year 1964 spending, leaving $35,000 in work undone. Should the NPS hold back construction work authorized for fiscal year 1966, Becker and Brown saw a new carryover of $70,000. "It is unnecessary to dwell on the evils of large unobligated balances," said the two officials, "except for this comment: Fort Davis will soon have passed through the new-area honeymoon." Failure to "get cracking" on the restoration program at the site suggested that "Congress might view [Fort Davis] with alarm, and shut off this rathole." They predicted that the historic site, begun with such fanfare, would become "a half-finished area struggling along for years toward a semblance of completion against the dual handicap of inadequate funds and deteriorating structures." Becker and Brown then concluded by requesting of SWR that WODC send immediately a full-time architect to complete plans for the visitors center, employee residences, and enlisted men's barracks (HB21); and to "allow the Park to prepare a special Part II [historic structures] report covering installation of historic doors, windows, shutters, and porch railings for all 13 structures on Officers' Row."  

By the spring of 1965, the stalemate on historic structure design at Fort Davis had eased only somewhat. Thomas Crellin was asked by WODC to offer estimates on the amount of time necessary to complete plans and specifications on four buildings: HB14 and 15 (two-story officers quarters); HB 39 (the granary); and HB37 (the commissary). Crellin considered these buildings as "in the best condition for restorative effort," and he anticipated that he would need some 640 hours of work (or four months) for their design. He could not guarantee when he could address the hospital (upon which he had already spent four weeks), or the chapel, barracks, magazine, and quartermaster corral. Because of this time constraint, Crellin echoed the sentiments of Becker and Brown that the Officers' Row facilities be unified in their research and design. Even with this reduction in time, the structures would require some 1,000 hours of research and drafting of plans (or six months' labor) by the historic architect. "It should be recognized," said Crellin, "that the conversion of Fort Davis into a restored entity cannot be accomplished overnight." He reported that "much favorable comment has been offered regarding the degree of progress already made," and the completion later in 1965 of the barracks buildings would satisfy many critics. Crellin did warn his superiors: "That the historic structures program at Fort Davis may be a continuing thing for more than a generation

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25Ibid.
is not unrealistic." It was his hope that "future generations may well feel that the history in our heritage is worthy of further development." Hence the NPS architect saw it as "incumbent on the present to record as faithfully and as completely as possible every detail that may be of value to the future."

The historic architect had the opportunity to influence regional opinion on Fort Davis when in late May 1965 the next superintendent, Frank Smith, came to west Texas to observe his new post prior to leaving SWR as its curator of museums. Smith, an anthropologist and music lover from Pueblo, Colorado, and Crellin agreed that "there's [design] work for three or four men, and Tom has one body, one pair of arms, and can occupy only one location at a time." WODC decided to send to Fort Davis a supervisor for the ongoing contracts, plus a draftsman for future work, and SWR accepted Superintendent Becker's call for a joint historic structures report on Officers' Row. These agreements were prompted by regional director Daniel Beard's growing concern about the costs of work at Fort Davis. "I believe we may face a serious situation," he told the chief of WODC on May 27, 1965, "because Congress has indicated again and again that it does not want to spend much money on restorations." Beard called upon WODC to assist the region to stay on the five-year plan, and to "complete the next stages of the development rapidly and economically."

No sooner had Beard and Becker established the working relationship that they hoped to pursue with WODC than did the San Francisco office challenge certain elements of the accelerated design program. Jerry Riddell of WODC saw shortcomings in the January 1963 "interpretive prospectus" drafted by Bob Utley; the document that had been the basis for Tom Crellin's planning. Frank Smith told Beard soon after his arrival at Fort Davis that "WODC (and specifically Charlie Pope, I guess) continue to scream about the combined reports on the officers' quarters." The new superintendent decided that it would not be worth the trouble to fight San Francisco, as he already had contractors at work on the quarters. Smith then addressed the controversy surrounding the post hospital and chapel. As to the former: "In spite of a firm conviction about the separation of Church and State, I agree with Mike [Becker] that we should revise the prospectus to include exterior reconstruction of the post Chapel." Smith also agreed that "WODC's feeling for the hospital is well based," and urged the SWR director to "meet [WODC] half way and let Crellin complete this report."

Beyond the concerns that NPS officials had for the historic structures at Fort Davis, the second area of focus was the landscape planning and grounds maintenance. Pablo Bencomo remembered in 1995 how the old parade ground had been covered with

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26 Memorandum of Crellin to WASO Supervising Architect, May 14, 1965, Administrative History Files, FODA Library.

27 Memorandum of Beard to Chief, WODC, May 27, 1965, Administrative History Files, FODA Library.

28 Memorandum of Franklin G. Smith, FODA Superintendent, to SWR Director, June 11, 1965, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 38, Folder D32a 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.
yucca (soap tree cactus) because of the neglect over the years by the caretakers for the Simmons/Jackson family and the James family before them. Ralph Russell, principal of the Anderson elementary school next door, and a seasonal ranger intermittently from 1973-1988, also recalled that the grounds were infested with the "cat's claw" plant brought in by the grazing of sheep, and the cottonwood grove had become choked with underbrush in the dry years of the 1950s. Local children would play in the pools of rainwater that collected in Hospital Canyon after a storm, and they called the area the "Devil's Sinkhole" for the erosion along the streams. Russell, who would specialize in research on the plant life of the site while a summer hire at Fort Davis, told of the overgrazing that destroyed much of the native vegetation, and of efforts by the NPS staff to bring some of these plants back to life.²⁹

The first year of park service management of the property taught valuable lessons to the staff about ecological change and continuity. In his monthly report for September 1963, Michael Becker noticed that "due to the numerous rains and no domestic stock grazing on the site we have an abundance of high grass." This plus the "lack of a sufficient water system to protect the shingled roofs which are now in place" threatened the park with an increased danger of fire. Then in March 1964, the high grass lured the sheep of Dude Sproul down from his leaseholdings in Hospital Canyon to graze along the boundaries of the historic site. Nonetheless, Pablo Bencomo, his maintenance crew, and the chief ranger addressed problems of tree removal, deposit of soil unearthed in the restoration of ruins and old buildings, planning for nature trails, and wildlife research and sightings. The alteration of the grounds (especially the turning of so much earth) tempted visitors to search for artifacts of the old military posts. Superintendent Becker thus reported in September 1963 that "the collection of artifacts and natural objects by visitors" constituted "our most prevalent offense." He believed that "an educational program should be intensified to help the public better understand why the Antiquities Act [of 1906] is enforced in areas of the National Park System."³⁰

Another aspect of NPS concern about the environment of Fort Davis was the mandate for nature trails at park sites. In the spring of 1964, Pablo Bencomo and Bob Dunnagan designed and built a trail for visitors that ran along the north ridge of park property. They also utilized the services of Dr. Barton Warnock, chairman of the biology department at Sul Ross Teachers College, who identified some 30 plants along the trail. The following year the state of Texas division of parks approached Fort Davis with plans to link their hiking trails with the north ridge route. This enhanced the appeal of Fort Davis to the growing legions of outdoor recreation enthusiasts; a situation made even more attractive in the fall of 1965 when the park service agreed to close the "unhistoric parade ground road that formerly passed by the Nature Trail sign." Visitors now would leave their vehicles in the new parking lot, explore the grounds, and then


have the opportunity to hike the hillsides around the fort without the intrusion of automobile traffic that detracted from the serenity that the park could offer.  

Figure 35. Construction of parking lot; Visitor Center on right (November 1965). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.

As Fort Davis neared completion of its first phase of historic structure research and planning, so too did the park face a growing need for accurate documentary research to prepare its museum exhibits and interpretive programs for visitors. Because the site commemorated the traditions of the frontier military, Robert Utley devoted much of his time to collecting documents and conducting interviews to make the park historically accurate in structure and interpretation. Utley saw in Fort Davis the opportunity to fulfill his own interest in the nineteenth century Indian-fighting army; a theme that had been ignored by his peers in the Southwest region, as they were influenced by the Santa Fe office’s proximity to parks focusing upon precontact Native archeology, or upon Spanish colonial history. Utley also recounted in 1994 that few scholars in the 1950s showed much concern for the story of Fort Davis. Fortunately the attraction of the buildings, grounds, and ruins of the site drew to it top officials like Tom Crellin, Frank Smith, Utley himself, and Nan V. Carson, the furnishing specialist from the NPS’ Midwest Regional Office in Omaha, Nebraska, who had researched the displays and exhibits at Fort Laramie, Wyoming. Then, too, Utley would suggest as hires for the position of park historian individuals who went on to prominent careers in the service, such as Jerry

31Ibid., April 1964; Memorandum of Smith to Assistant SWR Director, Operations, July 29, 1965, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 37, Folder D30a 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.
Rogers, first employed in 1964-1965 as a seasonal historian and who later became director of the NPS's historic preservation program in Washington, and in 1995 the director of the Southwest region; Ben Levy, historian at Fort Davis who also followed Utley to the Washington history office; Erwin Thompson, who left Fort Davis after two years as park historian (1963-1965) to work in Washington, and then went to Denver in 1972 to become part of the inaugural staff of the Denver Service Center (DSC); and David Clary, a seasonal employee at Fort Davis who went to Washington as a career historian.32

Figure 36. Completed parking lot of Fort Davis (April 1966). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.

The excitement of tracing the West's military past at Fort Davis thus served as a strong attraction for park service personnel, but interpreting that for the average visitor in the 1960s presented problems not unlike those surging through the nation's classrooms and media outlets. Issues like racial equality competed with the public desire for fond memories of the Old West; a situation compounding Fort Davis' multicultural history. The presence of women and families at the post in the nineteenth century would bring gender differences to the planning and research phases. Then too, the ongoing conflict in the jungles of Vietnam changed public attitudes about the military, polarizing opinion around the devastation that war brings to society. The isolation of Fort Davis, and its place in Texas frontier lore, spared it from the worst of the academic and popular debates about American racism and conquest, but the search for data on the story of the post would engage these questions nonetheless.

For Robert Utley, the most critical feature of historical research was its application to the proposed visitor center and museum. Thus in December 1962, SWR director Thomas Allen wrote to the Western Museum Laboratory in Berkeley, California, to ask that Utley be included on the design team for Fort Davis. "The master plan and historic structures report," Allen told the chief of the NPS laboratory, "propose telling the story of Fort Davis' role in frontier defense in a museum in a barracks that will be restored for visitor center purposes and setting forth the story of life at Fort Davis in a restored squad room, officer's quarters, and hospital." Because of the heavy emphasis on historical accuracy, Allen argued that "approval of the master plan should precede any serious museum planning, for disapproval would mean a fundamental revision of present museum thinking." The regional director also noted that "there is the question of when the rehabilitation of the barracks for visitor center purposes will be completed." To that end, Utley's presence on any museum design team would help the region meet its own agenda for Fort Davis, which was influenced in great measure by the scale of restoration work on site and political interest in the overall project.33

By working with the museum staff of the park service, Utley could advance his own research and writing of the Handbook of Fort Davis, which appeared in draft form in June 1963. The regional historian wrote widely to archives, museums, and private individuals in search of materials that fit both the museum's needs and his scholarship. The most logical target for material collection was Colonel Benjamin Grierson, commander of the post in the 1880s who secured the appropriations to build the facilities that endured long after abandonment of the fort. Utley learned that Texas Tech University, in Lubbock, had microfilmed all 2,800 pages of the Grierson collection that had been housed originally in the Illinois State Historical Library. Utley also took interest in the most important of the campaigns based at Fort Davis: Grierson's search in the summer of 1880 for the Warm Springs and Mescalero Apache bands under the leadership of Victorio. He thus wrote to Ralph Smith, history professor at Texas Tech, in April 1963 to solicit information about the death of Victorio at Tres Castillos, Mexico. The regional historian wanted to depict the Grierson campaigns in the new Fort Davis

33Memorandum of Allen to Chief, Western Museum Laboratory (WML), December 6, 1962, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
museum, and asked Smith how he could contact Mexican historical agencies about Colonel Joaquin Terrazas, commander of the forces that killed Victorio. Utley also needed advice on creating an exhibit on "an Apache attack on a Mexican hacienda of the period around 1850, plus or minus fifteen years or so," and acquisition of "a detailed map [that] will show West Texas travel routes of the 1850s and 1860s." 34

While Utley wanted to recount the military campaigns on the Texas frontier, he was also dedicated to historical accuracy that ran counter to the ethnocentric assumptions of many Americans. The regional historian and his associates at Fort Davis learned this early when in the spring of 1963 Utley started collecting information about the black cavalry and infantry units that comprised the bulk of the troops stationed at the post. He did not seek to cause controversy, as his letter of April 19, 1963 to the chief of military history in Washington indicated. Utley wanted only to have "color reproductions of the regimental crests of the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry" from the period of 1867-1880. Utley had no plans to depict daily life as experienced by young black males on the far western frontier, the racial tensions that their presence caused, the interaction between blacks, Indians, Hispanics, and Anglos, or of the denial of the historical reality of black defenders of the West in the nation's textbooks, films, artwork, or historical memory. 35

None of this mattered to some visitors more comfortable with the racial separations prevalent in Texas or the nation prior to the turbulent civil rights era of the 1960s. T.E. Fehrenbach wrote in Lone Star that "in Texas, the black man faced a combination of class disadvantage, differentiation, and imposed caste." Unlike the rest of the American South (and more like northern cities), blacks in Texas lived in urban areas in segregated neighborhoods. What shocked many white people in the Lone Star state was the level of black frustration expressed on television news stories from big cities like Los Angeles, Detroit, Newark, and others. This did not echo down to Texas, which Fehrenbach said had "a generally clear understanding between both black and white communities that the Texas economic and political power structure would not tolerate civic disorder." 36

How all this would affect the Park Service in its efforts to interpret the realities of Fort Davis became quite clear within six months of opening its doors. Superintendent Becker wrote in his monthly report for June 1963 that an "indignant lady visitor" approached one of the staff to declare: "You mean they're [the park service historians] going to make a shrine out of this nigger place!" Either this woman or someone else then voiced similar disgust at the Fort Davis Drug Store. Said Becker: "This party

34Margaret A. Flint, Assistant State Historian, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, IL, to Utley, December 28, 1962; Utley to Professor Ralph Smith, Texas Technological College, Lubbock, TX, April 18, 1963, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC; Superintendent's Monthly Reports, June 1963.

35Utley to Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, April 19, 1963, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

36Fehrenbach, Lone Star, 675, 680, 682, 686.
complained to the people that run the drug store . . . , that there were colored soldiers stationed at [Fort Davis] and this information was not included on our entrance sign, so that this particular party could by-pass this contaminated area." That same month, Becker was asked by Barry Scobee if the park service would accept a Texas state historical marker commemorating "the outstanding Confederate historical figure" for Jeff Davis County. The old judge had no more room on the courthouse lawn for this state-mandated marker because of "the great increase in historical interest generated in the last year or so." Masking his dislike for the intrusion of rebel history on federal property, Becker told regional officials that he had "registered neither strong approval nor disapproval, particularly since there doesn't seem to be much we can do about it unless we work with the State Highway Department." 37

Park service officials tried to accommodate what they saw as a parochial vision of history by using the Fort Davis museum as a source of information that few visitors (or locals) had encountered. One technique attempted was "the feasibility and desirability of using direct quotations for much of the [label copy] text and in printing them on antique type face." Assistant SWR director George W. Miller believed that "these labels will thus become a minor design motif," and the "labels themselves will take on something of the quality of specimens." His goal was to retain as much of the story of Fort Davis as possible, even though Western Museum Laboratory specialists warned that "'most visitors stubbornly resist reading.'" "So be it," said Miller, as he declared: "For once, let us consider the literate as well as the uninterested; this is a cheap way to do it." The assistant director planned to utilize the talents of Santa Fe-based publisher Jack Rittenhouse, former editor of the University of New Mexico Press, to print these labels in nineteenth-century cursive script, and then to work with Robert Utley and Frank Smith on completing the exhibit text in June 1963. 38

Throughout the spring and summer of that year, Bob Utley and his associates on site and in Santa Fe worked to represent the Fort Davis story in as complete and interesting a fashion as possible. Jackson E. Price, assistant NPS director for conservation, interpretation and use, wrote to the SWR director on April 18, 1963 to praise the work of Utley, and to express Washington's appreciation for the challenges that Fort Davis posed. "Experience in other parks where historic buildings are being used as Visitors Centers," said Price, "has amply illustrated the difficulty in minimizing limitations imposed by structures originally designed for quite different purposes." To that end, Price suggested that in converting HB20 (barracks) into the Fort Davis visitors center the regional office should note that "the complete absence of AV [audio-visual] interpretive devices is conspicuous when the Fort Davis Prospectus is compared with other current ones." Price wondered if such equipment "might be helpful in presenting

37 Superintendent's Monthly Reports, June 1963. The Confederate marker was eventually placed on the Jeff Davis County courthouse lawn. (Superintendent's Monthly Reports, August 1963.)

38 Memorandum of George W. Miller, Assistant SWR Director, to FODA Superintendent, May 14, 1963, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
the general background story of the fort," and that "perhaps the possibilities of a few audio stations along the tour route have been fully considered."\(^39\)

Turning to the historic structures and their interpretation, Price agreed with regional and park opinion that the post hospital "does not appear to outweigh in relative importance other ruined structures in the fort complex not recommended for restoration," as the "essential aspects of the story associated with the hospital could be presented by other means." The assistant NPS director for conservation was less sanguine about the museum design to "place formal exhibits in refurnished historic structures." Price considered this request to be "contrary to practices well established both within and outside the Service." Citing as his evidence the National Park Service Field Manual for Museums, Price warned that "the undesirability of attempting this in the barracks squad room, commanding officer's quarters or the hospital, if it were restored, will become apparent when furnishing plans are developed." The conservation director preferred that Utley and the museum laboratory "include these [exhibits] in the Visitor Center or provide for them in other space distinct from the refurnished quarters." Price thus paid close attention to the label copy for the museum, as he saw this location as the primary focus of interpretation for visitors to Fort Davis. This in turn led him to apologize for allocating too little money in the fiscal year 1963 budget for exhibit construction; a situation that would have to be corrected the following year.\(^40\)

The search for the proper historic artifacts to place in these quarters occupied much of the time of Frank Smith while he served in Santa Fe as regional curator. In late April and early May 1963, Smith spent over a week traveling throughout southern New Mexico and west Texas to locate antique dealers willing to sell artifacts of nineteenth century military life for inclusion in the Fort Davis museum. In El Paso, Smith claimed to have "visited virtually every pawn shop and gun store in town." Among his acquisitions were authentic revolvers, sabers, and photographs. Smith noted in particular the artifacts housed at the museum of the Fort Davis Historical Society. Somehow the society had managed to acquire "an 1873 Springfield rifle, with bayonet, which appears to be in excellent condition, and a series of Waybills, schedules, tickets, money orders, etc., from at least two of the stagecoach lines which ran through Fort Davis." Of less value was time spent in the "Treasure Trove Antique Store" in town, where the regional curator found items that were too "high-priced," or were replicas of historical arms which were "obviously [of] French manufacture."\(^41\)

Frank Smith's forays into Southwestern antique and pawn shops on behalf of Fort Davis proved enjoyable to the regional curator, and may have stimulated his interest in 1965 to succeed Michael Becker as superintendent. Less thrilling was the experience that fall of park historian Erwin Thompson, sent out by the superintendent to get photographs

\(^{39}\)Jackson E. Price, Assistant NPS Director, Conservation, Interpretation and Use, to the SWR Director, April 18, 1963, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

\(^{40}\)Memorandum of Smith to Chief, WML, June 3, 1963, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

\(^{41}\)Ibid.
of battle sites to include in Bob Utley's museum exhibit design. On October 3, 1963, Thompson drove a park service vehicle south of Sierra Blanca to locate the route taken by Colonel Grierson that culminated in the Battle of Tinaja de las Palmas. Using a recent map printed by the U.S. Geological Survey, Thompson followed what appeared to be an unimproved dirt road open to the public. At a point several miles down the road, Thompson came upon the house of the caretaker of the surrounding ranch, a man named Jim Tom Love. Described by Thompson as large, somewhat inarticulate (he had, in Thompson's words, a "fifth-grade education"), and hostile to public officials, Love called upon the park service historian to halt and explain why he was on private property. Thompson told investigators from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and also the Hudspeth County sheriff's office, that Love "jerked him out of the car and cursed at him," then hit Thompson on the back of the neck with a pistol several times. Love then ordered him at gunpoint to come with him into town to see the sheriff.\textsuperscript{42}

The incident in the west Texas mountains left Thompson, Becker, and other park service personnel bitter at the parochialism of justice in the area. As the foreman of the Hot Wells ranch (owned by the prominent Espy family), Love was well known to local law enforcement officials. His explanation that Thompson had trespassed on private land seemed to satisfy the justice of the peace of Hudspeth County who handled the complaint, as Texas law permitted "any means" necessary to remove someone from private property. Thompson was released when Love decided not to press charges, but the park service historian did try to bring Love to trial on charges of "unlawful restraint." The federal courts in El Paso refused to hear the case, but in December 1963 the Hudspeth County Court convicted the caretaker of "aggravated assault," and fined him $25 dollars. This outraged Superintendent Becker, who asked regional officials to protest the decision. The FBI concluded that there was not compelling federal interest in the case, since "Mr. Thompson was actually a trespasser and, although the assailant may have used more than permissible force in removing him, a $25 fine for such a violation might not be considered unconscionably small." The NPS and Justice Department further believed that Thompson's "civil suit against the assailant should adequately vindicate any wrongs he may have suffered."\textsuperscript{43}

The Jim Tom Love incident left bitter memories for Thompson, Becker, Bob Utley, and other park service officials of the time. In a pointed memorandum to the NPS field solicitor in Amarillo, Becker wrote that "the Justice Department may consider the case closed, but neither the superintendent nor Mr. Thompson feels that justice has been served." The Hudspeth County Court ruling left the impression, said Becker, "that if one is big enough and mean enough and has $25, he could apparently assault federal

\textsuperscript{42}Interview with Erwin N. Thompson, Denver, CO, April 5, 1995; Report of SA (Special Agent) Harrel Leon Davis, "Assaulting a Federal Officer," U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, El Paso, TX, October 14, 1963, Field Office File #EP 89-50, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid.; Memorandum of Bernard W. Baker, Assistant NPS Director, to the SWR Director, April 10, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
Thompson himself had to wear a neck brace for several weeks because of fractured vertebrae, and later contracted infectious hepatitis. The lawsuit went nowhere, as the Justice Department and NPS failed to support Thompson’s claims. Even on the park grounds, the historian could find no escape from the notoriety of the attack. Later in October 1963, Superintendent Becker reported that a local woman approached Thompson while on duty and asked if he had been "hit by a Texas man." When Thompson replied in the affirmative, the woman declared: "You’re lucky you’re still alive!" This proved too much for the superintendent to ignore, and he informed his superiors sarcastically: "Makes one feel real neighborly toward his fellow Texans."44

Thompson’s injuries and time lost forced Superintendent Becker to focus more closely in the fall and winter of 1963-1964 on the historical research program at Fort Davis. As word circulated about the presence of a new historic site, with national standards of preservation and collection of data, Fort Davis’ staff received calls and letters about potential artifacts and materials, as well as requests for assistance by local historical agencies and groups. The prestigious Amon Carter Museum of Western Art in Fort Worth offered to loan the park its series of slides depicting Frederic Remington’s famous scenes of buffalo soldiers. The Amon Carter also promised to send copies of Charles Schreyvogel paintings for the planned museum at the park. Such support from private individuals made the work of preparing the visitors’ exhibits that much easier and less expensive, and also indicated the level of interest throughout the West in a successful interpretive program for Fort Davis.45

Recreating the mood and spirit of the old military frontier also meant that the staff had to take on duties normally associated with scholars or professional historians and archeologists. In January 1964, Ranger Bob Dunnagan found traces of the first Fort Davis (1854-1861) in Hospital Canyon, and began a series of excavations to determine its extent and value to the park. Erwin Thompson also returned to his research duties that winter, locating the site of the Battle of Tinaja de las Palmas, which had drawn him into the Jim Tom Love incident earlier in the fall. He also found the site of the Battle of Rattlesnake Springs in his travels through the west Texas mountain country. Making Fort Davis’ expertise available to local historical groups also seemed wise to Michael Becker, as he responded favorably to the request from the Marathon Historical Society for help in "platting the Fort Pena [Colorado] subpost" southeast of Alpine.46

The most dramatic effort at recapturing the past at Fort Davis came in the fall of 1963, when regional museum curator Frank Smith promoted his idea of reenactments of the troops on parade, and the use of recorded music to evoke the sense of daily life at the post. Smith remembered in 1994 how the museum system of the Southwest Region

44 Memorandum of Becker to NPS Field Solicitor, Amarillo, TX, March 3, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC; Superintendent’s Monthly Reports, October, November 1964.

45 Smith to Mitchell A. Wilder, Director, Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth, TX, November 15, 1963, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

"was in turmoil," and how it "had not been updated since the 1930s." The MISSION 66 program promoted the establishment of museums to attract and inform visitors, and the region witnessed the creation of nearly two dozen such facilities. Fort Davis offered Smith and the SWR the best chance to experiment with advanced technology and research methods of historical interpretation, and the future superintendent worked closely with Michael Becker, Robert Utley, and WASO historian Harold Peterson to create just the right setting for the retreat parade and music.47

What made the research of the retreat so authentic was Smith's use of a special cavalry unit stationed at Fort Sill in western Oklahoma. Major General L.S. Griffin, commander of Fort Sill, told SWR's Daniel Beard in October 1963 that his post had a private unit that had formed to participate in Armed Forces Day celebrations. This group, consisting of some 50 mounts and riders, could perform for the park service if the NPS provided the musical arrangements. To that end, Donald J. Erskine, NPS chief of the audiovisual services branch, wrote to Dr. William Fulton, professor of education at the University of Oklahoma, to identify someone capable of recording the sounds of the parade unit. SWR director Beard wanted only the highest quality of production for the parade retreat, given the attention and funding already expended on Fort Davis. After listing for the NPS director all the specifications for the performance of the Fort Sill unit, he reminded his superior that "this may prove to be a long-lasting and wide-spread program. In any case, we do not want to settle for anything which could become, in future years, simply 'run of the mill' or mediocre." Thus the park service spared no expense to use the Motion Picture Department of the University of Oklahoma, and to generate sound in excess of 20,000 decibels to blanket the parade ground as the Army would have done.48

As the restoration of post life moved forward in late 1963, so did the plan for exhibits in the park museum. The Western Museum Laboratory released in November its comments on the work of Messrs. Utley, et al, asking Superintendent Becker to add his thoughts prior to final acceptance of the plan. John W. Jenkins, WML chief, had mostly grammatical corrections, and saw little difficulty with the historical content of the plan. Michael Becker echoed Jenkins' sentiments in January 1964, praising the hard work of the design and research team: "There is excellence all the way through." The report revealed the lengths to which the team went to ensure historical accuracy, and the imaginative strategies that they employed to bring out the Fort Davis story for visitors. Between the exhibits, music, parade retreat, and historic structures, Fort Davis seemed


48L.S. Griffin, Major General, USA, Commanding, U.S. Army Artillery and Missile Center, Fort Sill, OK, to Beard, October 25, 1963; Donald J. Erskine, Chief, NPS Branch of Audiovisual Services, to Dr. William Fulton, College of Education, University of Oklahoma, December 31, 1963; Memorandum of Beard to the NPS Director, February 24, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC; Frank Smith interview, September 9, 1994.
ready in the spring of 1964 to fulfill the hopes of the park service to become what all involved considered the best statement of frontier military life in the Southwest.49

With all this attention paid to the cause of history at Fort Davis, Michael Becker had high hopes in the winter and spring of 1964 as he sought to fill the position of temporary historian. Erwin Thompson needed help meeting the deadlines emerging from the dual track of historic structure completion and museum exhibit design. Unfortunately no one accepted the position as advertised, and by April the superintendent changed the scope of work to permit the hiring of a college student. Becker called Barry Scobee's old friend at the Texas Tech library, Frank Temple, and asked his help in locating someone who could work for the summer as a seasonal employee. Responding to the call was Jerry Rogers, then in the spring of 1964 a graduate assistant pursuing a master's degree in history at Texas Tech. On May 31, Rogers, his wife Peggy, and their infant daughter arrived in Fort Davis to begin a career that would lead the young history major to Washington as associate director for cultural resources for the Park Service, and in 1995 to Santa Fe to become the last director of the Southwest region.50

Rogers' presence on the Fort Davis staff allowed for an acceleration of historical research and writing of reports for the museum and historic building programs. On June 30, the Fort Davis Historical Society closed their small museum on the grounds of the park, and Becker, Thompson, and Frank Smith looked over the artifacts for potential acquisition. Jerry Rogers went to work immediately writing research reports on the historic structures, leading Becker to tell the regional office: "[Rogers] is to be complimented on [the reports'] high quality and for his ability in the field of historical methodology." In July, Becker further praised the Texas Tech graduate: "Ranger Rogers . . . prepared a very fine brief on the results that might be anticipated when HB28 (Post Chapel) and HB40 (Quartermaster Corral) are reconstructed." Rogers was "now well underway in research on HB46 (Post Hospital) in preparation for a Historic Structures Part II Report." All this work highlighted the park's need to send Erwin Thompson to Washington to seek out National Archives material that Robert Utley had not identified in his earlier studies, which had focused more on the military campaigns of the soldiers rather than on their daily life and surroundings.51

Turning his attention in the fall of 1964 to the interiors of the historic structures, Michael Becker addressed two concerns of the museum design team: the artwork for the visitors center, and the furnishing plans for the officers' quarters. Park service officials in Washington and San Francisco's WML suggested that Becker employ Nick Eggenhofer of Cody, Wyoming, to paint the murals in the museum. NPS historian Roy E. Appleman wanted the Wyoming western artist to consider as many as seven scenes, all

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49 Memorandum of John W. Jenkins, Chief, WML, to SWR Regional Historian, November 8, 1963; Memorandum of Becker to SWR Director, January 3, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

50 Superintendent's Monthly Reports, January, March, April, May 1964; Interview with Jerry Rogers, Director, NPS Southwest Systems Support Office (SWSSO), Santa Fe, NM, March 24, 1995.

51 Superintendent's Monthly Reports, June, July 1964; Erwin Thompson interview, April 5, 1995.
featuring soldiers in the field engaged in combat with Indians. Becker concurred, but worried about the cost (Appleman suggested paying Eggenhofer $5,000 for three paintings). "A mural in the Fort Davis visitor center," said the superintendent, "would put this museum on a par with some of the better ones in the System." What concerned Becker was his realization that "there is a lot of research that must be done if the furnishings plan is to be a proper one, and that research is going to cost money." Purchases of artifacts for the historic structures "are undoubtedly going to cost much more than the original estimates," Becker told the SWR director, and plans for "saving the hospital and HB-18 are going to be expensive propositions." For those reasons, the superintendent asked for only one mural in the visitors center, "located on the east wall in that area between the window and the porch." Becker saw the reasoning behind Appleman's plan, but believed that "a little lobby furniture, while not as aesthetically desirable, would in many, many cases fill the need of the visiting public more than that of the art work."52

The superintendent's caution about the scale of research and acquisition of furnishings echoed concerns within the park service. In June 1964, the regional office asked the architects of WODC for advice on Fort Davis. Jerry Riddell told the SWR director that "we would recommend that considerable effort should be made to find a private donor to provide the enthusiasm, money, etc., for the work." This reflected the rising cost of Fort Davis rehabilitation, and also the WODC's experience with a similar refurnishing study done for Fort Laramie National Historic Site by Nan Carson. "We would hesitate to evaluate, cost wise, Miss Carson's report on the Post Surgeon's quarters at Fort Laramie," said Riddell. She had written a 120-page study that lacked "pictures of historical furnishings, typical interiors, elevations drawings of the furnishings or cost estimates of the individual items." Fort Davis was not comparable to the site at Fort Laramie, and the WODC chief architect suggested that SWR seek out someone else for the task. "We would hesitate to recommend a female interior decorator for the furnishing of the barracks," Riddell concluded, and suggested instead "someone who has done a hitch without commissioned background, and he might well be colored [a black person] to give further authenticity to the job."53

The Southwest region disregarded Riddell's opposition to Nan Carson's work, or her perceived inability to recreate a man's world in the barracks at Fort Davis. In September 1964, Becker learned that Carson would prepare a furnishing study for his park sometime during the following 12 months. This came on the heels of a request from Jane E. Negbaur, assistant home furnishings editor of Family Circle Magazine, who asked if she could send a photographer to the post to study the historic character of homes in west Texas. Becker promoted the work at his park as the type of setting that

52Floyd A. LaFayette, Acting Chief, NPS Branch of Museum Development, to Nick Eggenhofer, Cody, WY, November 6, 1964; Memorandum of Roy E. Appleman, NPS Chief Historian, to SWR Director/Frank Smith, December 16, 1964; Memorandum of Riddell to SWR Director, December 8, 1964; Memorandum of Becker to SWR Director, December 31, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

53Memorandum of Riddell to SWR Director, July 10, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
Negbaur envisioned. Unfortunately, said the superintendent, "it will be several years before the very handsome stone quarters of the commanding officer will be fully restored and furnished as it was in the 1880s." Becker, who had yet to learn of the selection of Nan Carson to conduct such a study at Fort Davis, nonetheless told the Family Circle editor: "We feel sure this structure and its furnishings will be well worth a feature article when finished - about 1967."

Compounding Becker's problems in accommodating Nan Carson's work was the lack of detail on the interiors of the buildings, and Erwin Thompson's departure in September for a two-month training program at the NPS' Mather Training Center. The superintendent also noted that "all restoration at Fort Davis is being done in terms of the '80s [1880s] due to peculiar conditions in building alterations and construction during that decade," and because "there were nine significant occupants of the CO's [Commanding Officer's] house during that period and we do not yet know which one(s) have left the best records for that purpose." Historical research to date indicated that "the promising colonel was Benjamin Grierson." Among the reasons cited by Becker were: "His tenure was the longest [1882-1885]; he was one of the more positive characters in the position; and he had later ties in the Fort Davis community as a retired general." Becker believed that his staff could compile the necessary documents for Nan Carson by June 1965, and that the regional office would know best how much time and money her efforts would require.

The historical work accomplished at Fort Davis in its first two years animated Michael Becker's first "annual interpretive report," delivered to the NPS director on January 12, 1965. The superintendent remarked upon the strong visitation that his park had witnessed: 86,565 since opening 24 months earlier. Many were drawn by the novelty of a park under construction; others by the distinctive story unfolding before their eyes. Due to the curiosity of the visitors, Becker lamented that "only slight progress was made in the preparation and installation of interpretive markers concerning the history of the fort." Vandals also found the signs attractive, requiring more permanent anchoring and higher cost for replacement. Ranger Bob Dunnagan had built a series of redwood nature trail signs in the shape of an NPS arrowhead which visitors found "quite pleasing." With the closing of the Fort Davis Historical Society museum, all these indicators of park information became even more critical.

Superintendent Becker then spoke of the need for more historical research, both documentary and artifactual. Word had reached the park that Robert Utley's historical handbook neared distribution, and the park staff received many visitor requests for such a publication. Then the increased efforts at research and excavation undertaken by

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54 Becker to Jane E. Negbaur, Assistant Home Furnishings Editor, Family Circle Magazine, New York, NY, September 21, 1964; Memorandum of Becker to the SWR Director, September 22, 1964, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.

55 Becker to SWR Director, September 22, 1964.

56 Memorandum of Becker to NPS Director, January 12, 1965, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
Messrs. Thompson, Dunnagan, Rogers, and local schoolteacher John Mitchell unearthed over 15,000 artifacts. "We are greatly behind in the cataloguing of these specimens," said the superintendent, and he saw the need for a full-time curator to reduce not only this backlog but the new acquisitions from future excavations and private donations. One example of the latter that Becker wished to draw to the attention of NPS officials was "five color slides of water colors showing the first Fort Davis, painted by Capt. Arthur T. Lee in the 1850s," sent to the park by the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences in upstate New York. Becker could also report that the Newberry Library in Chicago had agreed to send 2,400 pages of microfilm from its Grierson papers collection; a source of great value to Nan Carson when she would arrive to design the furnishings of the historic structures. Finally, the superintendent calculated the success of the historical work at his park by noting a visit in November 1964 by some 30 national travel writers as part of the "Texas Travel Writers Tour." Becker complained that "the visit was much too short for anything but a fleeting contact," and reported that "there seems to be a widespread illusion that the length of a visit must be measured against the number of acres in a park."57

Research efforts the following year built momentum despite the departure in December 1964 of Bob Dunnagan, Fort Davis' first ranger. His acceptance of a similar appointment at the newly created Canyonlands National Park in southeastern Utah came just as Superintendent Becker had written so glowingly of the potential he saw for his staff. One example of that enthusiasm was the creation of an historical file on all officers stationed at the old fort "in order to facilitate the answering of questions" by visitors. Another milestone for Fort Davis in serving the interpretive needs of patrons was the discussion between park staff and Earl Jackson, executive secretary of the Southwestern Monuments Association (SWMA), to establish a sales outlet for the private group's publications on the Park Service. Frank Smith wrote Jackson in May 1965 to indicate that the imminent release of Bob Utley's Fort Davis handbook required some venue to handle sales of this and other materials. Smith believed that "the addition of the visitor center and the very fine publicity that the staff have been getting for Fort Davis should result in a major [visitation] increase, starting this summer." The superintendent-designee felt that "a stock of 1,000 copies of the Historical Handbook would be reasonable, and should turn over by the fall months." Smith also ordered a variety of historical titles on military and Indian history, but was cautious about marketing Barry Scobee’s *Fort Davis, Texas.* "The writing is good," Smith told Jackson, "and his only real departure from fact, as far as we can tell, is in his Indian Emily story -- which we are debunking in our programs."58

Pushing the story of Fort Davis eventually led in 1965 to the closest brush with the black soldiers' experience; a situation prompted in part by the growing awareness of

57Ibid.

58Memorandum of Smith to Executive Secretary, Southwestern Monuments Association (SWMA), May 25, 1965; Smith to Earl Jackson, Executive Secretary, SWMA, July 30, 1965, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Denver FRC.
civil rights legislation and unrest, both a function of the turbulence of the decade. Erwin Thompson had become interested in the lives of the black troopers from the research he conducted, and from the lack of prominence their story received in the media, history texts, or even the park service. His curiosity increased in January 1965, when Don Rickey, Jr., park planner for the Midwest Region, informed the Fort Davis historian that "through a newspaper clipping and picture, I have run across mention of a 103-year-old Negro 9th Cavalryman who is a pensioned Indian Wars veteran." Rickey understood Thompson to be pursuing "colored infantry and cavalry life at Fort Davis, 1880-90," and wondered if "this Indian Wars pensioner could be a mine of detail information on what life was like for a colored cavalryman in the 1880's at a western post."59

The soldier, Simpson Mann, lived in the Veterans Administration retirement home at Leavenworth, Kansas, and Rickey hoped that he could glean from him material not available in the standard research sources on the frontier military. Superintendent Becker encouraged Rickey to pursue the Mann interview, and suggested how this could expand the data base on the black soldier at Fort Davis. "Knowing that relatively little has been done on Negro soldiers specifically," Becker told Rickey, "we have submitted an RSP [Research Services Proposal] on that subject and are hopeful it will be approved." He also noted that his staff had done work on Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper, and informed Rickey of a new printing of his Negro Frontiersman: The Western Memoirs of Henry O. Flipper (El Paso, 1963). Rickey knew the editor of the volume (Theodore Harris of El Paso), and passed along to Becker mention of a collection of the "now rare monthly newsletter of the National Indian War Veterans," the Winners of the West (1922-1944). In this were "a few reminiscences, articles, and letters written by Negro ex-Regulars." He praised Becker and Thompson for their proposal to research the black soldier at Fort Davis, and it was "very much worthwhile and badly needed." Becker then sent to Rickey a list of questions to put to Simpson Mann, focusing on such details as "a certain way to fix up a footlocker for inspection," "What color were the bed blankets?" or "Was there a ceiling or open rafters in the barracks room?" The list did seek out some unusual information distinctive to the black experience, such as "Did you ever see Chinese enlisted men in the Infantry or Cavalry?" and "Did the [white] officers ever say the Negro soldiers were better than the white? If so, in what way were they better? Worse? Do you agree?"60

If Thompson was to pursue the black story of long ago, he also thought that contemporary black experience counted for something at Fort Davis. He learned of the depth of the buffalo soldiers' history when he went to Washington in the winter of 1964-1965, where he met Sara Dunlap Jackson, an archivist with the National Archives. A lifelong student of the black military, and being black herself, Jackson showed

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59 Memorandum of Don Rickey, Jr., Park Planner, NPS Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, NE (MWR), to Thompson, January 13, 1965, #14 Area History (1963-1967) File, FODA Library.

Thompson many sources for future work on Fort Davis and the black units that served there. Thompson remarked in an interview 30 years later about his heightened awareness of the linkages between past and present at Fort Davis when he noted how many of the "Hispanic" maintenance crew had Negro features, and seemed "proud of their black roots." One such worker, George Bentley, came to Thompson one day in February 1965 with his father's discharge papers from the Army. Private George Bentley, Sr., had been a "company baker" in Company K of the 9th Cavalry, stationed at Fort Davis "just after the Fort was reestablished in 1867."61

This bit of local history, connected as it was to the larger story of Fort Davis and the national emphasis on race in the 1960s, led Thompson to write a lengthy report in March 1965 about the Bentley family, which he read at the ceremony where George Bentley officially donated his father's papers to the park. Private Bentley, unlike many residents of the area, was "one of Fort Davis' earliest permanent settlers." Because he was "half Negro and half white," his story had been ignored by Carl Raht, Barry Scobee, and later promoters of local history. Bentley, Sr., had been the illegitimate son of a slave woman and white man, and the Civil War had offered him the opportunity to "get away from his mother and his brother, neither of whom he liked." The Park Service historian described George, Jr., as possessing "a quiet dignity, a warm but controlled and very deep voice, a patriarchal touch of pride, and an honest friendliness that 'betters the breed of men.'" Thompson then took note of his wife, who was "of that older generation of Mexican ladies that is becoming all too rare in this noisy world." "Shy, a trifle nervous, silent, and full of deference to her husband," Mrs. Bentley "remained slightly but deliberately in the background." In a remark that spoke as much to the realities of race in west Texas as it did to the life of Private Bentley, Thompson concluded: "The Bentley's today are neither proud nor ashamed of being partly Negro. It is just a simple fact that needs no artificial support." The historian then compared Bentley to the more vocal black critics of American racism, and noted: "When race is so much of a problem for everyone else these days, Mr. Bentley's philosophy on it seems calm indeed."62

While Erwin Thompson's heartfelt sympathy for a fellow employee and the son of a Fort Davis veteran may have echoed the sentiments of a more liberal nation in the 1960s, this did not play well in Fort Davis, which might also explain George Bentley, Junior's reluctance to speak about his family's history. Gene Hendryx, by now a Texas state representative, recalled how he questioned at the time what he saw as the park service's desire to emphasize the buffalo soldier instead of what the representative called the "whole story," which he interpreted as the larger world of the frontier army. Erwin Thompson himself left the NPS in June 1965, seeking a doctorate in history at the University of California, Davis (where his plan was to write a dissertation on the black soldier in the West). This meant that Jerry Rogers would return for his second (and last) summer as seasonal historian at Fort Davis without the guidance of Thompson. Rogers

61Erwin Thompson interview, April 5, 1995; Superintendent's Monthly Reports, February, March 1965.

did remember how the attempt to explain the black presence at the post had caused comment in town; a situation that only exacerbated the growing reputation of park service staff to flaunt the racial conventions of west Texas.\(^{63}\)

By being a native of the region, and having had a year’s exposure to the peculiarities of race in Fort Davis, Jerry Rogers returned to a community where anything that he and his family might have done would be scrutinized and discussed at length. Rogers recounted how people in town "loved Fort Davis, but disliked its black story." He characterized the "whole structure of race" in town as "very delicate." This consisted of the paradox of racial separation between Anglos and Hispanics, the vestiges of segregated schools, and the surprising amount of intermarriage. "The park service equalized and leveled" social life in town, said Rogers in 1995, and racial divisions had a strangely "superficial" cast to them. As an example, he told the story of Erwin Thompson inviting the all-Hispanic maintenance crew to a party in his room at the Hotel Limpia one evening, where Jerry and Peggy Rogers were the only other Anglos besides Michael and Ruth Becker, and Thompson. After a while, Mrs. Rogers wondered why the men had not brought their wives to the party, as she had hoped to talk to the women about life in town. For a time the men demurred, claiming that their wives were not interested in coming. Only later did Peggy Rogers realize that the women were sitting in their cars in the Limpia parking lot, all dressed for a social occasion. She went out into the lot, spoke to the women, and learned that no Anglo had ever invited Hispanics to their private social function, let alone important people like federal employees of the Park Service. This incident only validated the comment of Bob Utley that Fort Davis struck him as "racist as hell," and which Jerry Rogers considered "a fascinating cultural study." The moment also led to close friendships between park staff and local residents of different cultural backgrounds.\(^{64}\)

Perhaps that sensitivity (as well as the comments on her work at Fort Laramie by Jerry Riddell) affected Nan Carson, who came to the park in late June 1965 to conduct her long-awaited furnishing study. She flew into the El Paso airport to be met not by the superintendent or chief ranger, but the seasonal historian, Jerry Rogers. This led Carson to remark to SWR officials that "Fort Davis has experienced a number of personnel changes in recent months." Bob Crisman had just taken over as chief ranger from Bob Dunnagan, with Crisman’ most recent appointment at an archeological park in Arizona (Montezuma Castle National Monument), and Frank Smith had been superintendent a mere two weeks. "Despite the newness of the situation for almost all personnel," said Carson, "work and planning have not flagged and Fort Davis certainly appears to be embarking on its most critical development phase in excellent hands."\(^{65}\)

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\(^{63}\)Erwin Thompson interview, April 5, 1995; Jerry Rogers interview, March 24, 1995.

\(^{64}\)Ibid.; Robert Utley interview, October 23, 1994.

\(^{65}\)Memorandum of Nan V. Carson, Historic Restorations Specialist, MWR, to the SWR Associate Regional Director, July 8, 1965, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 39, Folder D3415a, 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.
After eight days on site, the MWR "historic restorations specialist" became more convinced of the potential for Fort Davis within the park system. "I was enormously impressed with both the quantity and orderliness of progress at Fort Davis," wrote Carson, "which indicates careful planning and meticulous follow through." The veteran of historical restoration at Fort Laramie was touched in particular by the "magnificent interpretation" afforded by Frank Smith's "bugle call and retreat programs." "Their ghostly echoes across the valley and against the rock cliffs surrounding the Fort are indeed moving," she told the SWR associate director. The park also presented twice daily a full retreat parade, "prefaced by an interpretative explanation to the visitors by seasonal personnel." This she considered "a bit long (18 minutes), when one is standing in the hot Texas sun." Carson did note, however, that she "did not see one visitor leave before it ended." Even with the problems of sound projection, the experience of the retreat parade "is now an extremely effective interpretive device."66

Seasonal historian Jerry Rogers had provided Ms. Carson with ample documentation on the Grierson family and its uses of the quarters under her study (the commanding officers' house and the barracks squad room). Tom Crellin also guided Carson through the "fabric of the two structures . . . to discover evidence of interior finish and detailing, built-in elements, and other historic decorative treatment." In a gesture to the local community, which would have to provide many of the artifacts for the project, Carson spoke to a group of 50 members of the Fort Davis Historical Society, using for comparison a series of slides on her work at Fort Laramie. By the end of her week on site, Ms. Carson met with SWR director Daniel Beard, WODC chief Sanford Hill, and NPS supervisory architect Charley Pope "to inspect the development and to discuss future plans and programs." From this high-level gathering came an agreement to open the refurbished barracks by October 1966, and the following year the officers quarters. "This will be a tight schedule from both the refurnishing and restoration standpoints," said Carson, "and means that procurement must begin for some of the objects needed for Fort Davis at once."67

Opening the visitor center in the fall of 1965 proved less difficult than finding monies to procure the furnishing suggested by Nan Carson. On November 8, the park welcomed the first visitors to HB20, the former barracks building, and Superintendent Smith wrote later that month that "visitors continue to be entranced by the magnificence of the 19th century design and the very effective reproduction of the original building." His fear that the opening would be delayed and affect visitation did not materialize, and he reported to the regional director: "Thanks to the smooth and efficient handling of the move by Maintenanceman Bencomo and his crew, there was only a 30-minute interruption in visitor service." But the strategy for furnishing the center encountered opposition in Santa Fe, as the acting regional director, George W. Miller, wrote to Smith on November 23 warning that the park had overspent available funds, even though Smith's estimates for interior furnishings "generally appear to be in line with what has

66Ibid.

67Ibid.
been provided for other visitor centers in this Region." What triggered Miller's concerns was a change of attitude in Washington about the efficacy of Fort Davis' budget. The park carried over into fiscal year 1965 a deficit of $5,300, and Smith's request for an additional $4,500 for visitor center furnishings brought the shortfall to nearly $10,000; a sum that would affect the planned expenditure of $97,000 for all of fiscal year 1966 on construction and furnishing of the historic structures. The SWR itself also faced "an extremely large deficit," and could not guarantee new monies for Fort Davis in light of the fact that "just last week at a large park in this Region we took the drastic action of requiring the Superintendent and the Design Office to reduce the scope of work being prepared for bids in order to provide funds for a large change order."^68

Acting director Miller's memorandum caught Fort Davis personnel completely by surprise, given the constant and substantial funding support that the park had enjoyed for its first two years. The decision to limit spending on furnishings "strikes terror into our hearts," Superintendent Smith wrote to the regional office, "and raises a number of questions which we find it hard to answer." Where Smith's predecessor, Michael Becker, recalled in a 1994 interview that he always had enough money to conduct park business, and Erwin Thompson remembered that each of the six full-time employees had their own staff cars, by late 1965 the cost of doing business at Fort Davis had alarmed Smith's superiors. Part of this concern came from the escalating cost of the Asian conflict in Vietnam, plus the price tag associated with President Johnson's social welfare programs known as the "Great Society." Budget officers of the federal government as early as 1965 realized that there was not an unlimited pool of resources to meet these new demands, as well as fulfill such promises as a million-dollar restoration program at Fort Davis.69

This turn of events left Superintendent Smith explaining such petty details as why he had asked for padded chairs for the audiovisual room rather than standard metal or plastic ones ("I find these pretty hard after the first fifteen minutes" of a film or speakers program), not to mention the need for staff to work some 8,000 hours cleaning, cataloguing, and storing the over 18,000 artifacts now stuffed into closets and drawers at the park. The former regional curator also predicted that future cuts in the Fort Davis budget endangered the very purpose of historic preservation: "Having been through the complications of more than one archeological excavation," said the onetime anthropology major at the University of Arizona, "where the records and preservation work were held up, I have nightmares about what could happen here!" Smith praised Michael Becker and Tom Crellin for having been careful in their own budget estimates, and refused to accept any blame for overspending in comparison to other parks. He then cautioned the SWR director that the opening of the visitors center "coincides with our dedication [then

^68 Memorandum of George W. Miller, Acting SWR Director, to FODA Superintendent, November 23, 1965, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 39, Folder D3415a.

^69 Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, November 26, 1965, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 39, Folder D3415a; Michael Becker interview, October 21, 1994; Erwin Thompson interview, April 5, 1995.
scheduled for April 30, 1966] and with our final closing of the parade ground to vehicular traffic." "It does indeed appear," the superintendent conceded, "that the day of reckoning for our past extravagances is upon us." Yet Smith believed that continued reductions in the plans for Fort Davis (one scenario extended completion from 1966 to 1970) "could effectively kill us for at least another year, providing a mass of public relations difficulties almost as bad as the things resulting from recent Washington Office ‘reconsideration’ of what we’re trying to do." 70

What made the shift of fiscal emphasis more troubling for Smith and his staff was the increase of visitation that the park experienced in 1965, and the changing perceptions that the local community seemed to have about the NPS and its plans. This was first apparent in matters of employment, as in April the Washington office of the park service called to inquire about a complaint lodged against Superintendent Becker’s hiring practices. An unnamed local resident had approached county judge Tom Gray to declare that Becker ignored his military veteran’s status when considering him for employment, and had also contacted west Texas U.S. Representative Ed Foreman. Conversations between Becker, Gray and the aggrieved party confirmed that the park had followed proper procedure, and the complaint was dismissed. 71

One source of employment that the park utilized significantly, and which it could not have performed its duties without, was the various "Great Society" programs for youth and the unemployed that proliferated by the mid-1960s. In August 1964, Bob Dunnagan agreed to work with the "Job Corps" program to attract young workers who could assist with such tasks as maintenance, artifact preservation, and office work. In 1965 the park took advantage of the National Youth Corps (NYC) that targeted potential high-school dropouts by providing them with employment and training in their communities (whereas the Job Corps moved older youth to centers nationwide). Smith had high praise for the supervision of these workers by Pablo Bencomo, who hired many Hispanic youth to assist him with the challenging work of structural maintenance. The majority of these workers went on to college or work in trades and construction, while several pursued careers in the NPS. Interest in federal social programs that would benefit the community also extended to education, as the new historian, Benjamin Levy, attended a meeting in November 1965 where local citizens sought to develop a "Head Start" program in town. Levy, who had come from Edison Laboratory National Historic Site in New Jersey, agreed to speak to the Fort Davis School Board that December about the innovative concept of federal funding for pre-school children of modest means to prevent problems of learning later on in life. Superintendent Smith encouraged Levy’s cooperation with the local group, which if successful with Head Start could lead to "a full-fledged Community Action Agency . . . to foster the Neighborhood Youth Program which could be of great value to the [NPS] site." The local Lions Club agreed to sponsor these activities, and Levy served on its committee for educational and social welfare, while Pablo Bencomo worked on "a local plan to provide cooperative water and

70Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, November 26, 1965.

71Superintendent’s Monthly Reports, April 1965.
sewage systems for Fort Davis;" a benefit of special interest to the Hispanic community around the park.\textsuperscript{72}

Federal money flowing to social programs also had their counterpart in Texas with the increase of funds for Davis Mountain State Park. In July 1965 Smith received word that the state park would receive nearly $500,000 "for additional physical development during the coming fiscal year." The monies had been secured by state representative Gene Hendryx, and "one plan is to redevelop the scenic route which climbs the far side of North Ridge and ends in a picnic area overlooking Hospital Canyon." Hendryx remembered how dilapidated the state park had become by the mid-1960s, and how the federal activity over the mountain at Fort Davis spurred local interest in improving the older state facility. One reason was Smith's report that Fort Davis had recorded "the largest percentage increase of any Texas tourist attraction in the first half of 1965 [48.8 percent]," and that "it was especially interesting to know that historic forts scored three of the four top increases in Texas [parks]." Smith later wrote to the regional office that Davis Mountain State Park was targeted to become "a model for state parks of this size," and he took pride in creating "a strong climate of cooperation between the two staffs;" a process that included the work of Ranger Bob Crisman to institute the popular series of campfire talks at Davis Mountain.\textsuperscript{73}

The success of this endeavor brought to Fort Davis and the state park on October 29, 1965 the "Texas State Legislature Subcommittee on Historic Sites." Chaired by Gene Hendryx, the group of lawmakers, reported Smith, "asked many penetrating questions on our administration, program and policies, on the techniques and cost of structural preservation . . . and delved especially deep on the subtleties of visitor service and preservation." The superintendent then described the committee's chairman as "one of the most prominent of young West Texas politicians, and . . . a fast friend of the area," and reported that Hendryx "led the group in a discerning analysis of the difficulties involved and proper and tasteful preservation." Smith declared that this body "represents something of a revolution in Texas park history," as "the State is now moving to preserve significant Texas Sites and the Representatives who visited here [were] interested in the techniques of managing, protecting, and interpreting the Area." To complete the remarkable series of events that week, on October 30 the Hendryx subcommittee was followed at Fort Davis by the Texas State Historical Survey

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., August 1964, November, December 1965; Frank Smith interview, September 9, 1994; Memorandum of Bobby L. Crisman, Acting FODA Superintendent, to SWR Director, September 7, 1965; Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, October 7, 1965, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 31, Folder A9819c Youth Opportunity Corps 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.

\textsuperscript{73}Superintendent's Monthly Reports, July, September, October 1965; Memorandum of Smith to the NPS Director, February 11, 1965, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 56, NPS (AI)-2 Information and Interpretive Services 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA; Interview with Bob Crisman, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, NM, March 3, 1995.
Marketing the success of Fort Davis was prominent in the mind of Superintendent Smith as he contemplated the most important event of 1966: planning and execution of the dedication ceremonies that April. Visitation at his park for the calendar year 1965 had topped the previous year by 25 percent (107,866 visitors), and Fort Davis had witnessed in January 1966 an increase of 45.9 percent over the same month in 1965; a result Smith believed of the new entrance road and curious locals eager to see the visitor center. This road had also reduced dramatically the incidences of trespassing and vandalism on the property. The regional office sent to Fort Davis in January a landscape team to consider reseeding the parade grounds, while the "Western Tree Crew" came on site to clean up the Cottonwood Grove for future use as a picnic area. In terms of historical research and community interest, Smith reported that historian Ben Levy had spent five weeks in Washington that winter collecting documents and photographs for the park library; a total of 22,000 pages of materials on microfilm, 150 historic maps, and 35 photographs. The only problem to report because of the new attractions at the park was that "the legend of 'Indian Emily' is again raising some fever." Because locals could no longer drive onto the post grounds, "in some cases [they] appear to be quite disturbed." "The lack of roads to other areas," said Smith, "comes in for some criticism but not to the extent of that relating to the Indian Emily marker." But the growth in out-of-town tourism to the historic site had also triggered "agitation for motels and other highly developed urban style facilities." Smith saw cause for concern with the potential for blighted development to the south and east of the park, and reported that "we would like to prepare the ground for continuing conforming use along these two sides of the property."75

History and visitor services would be relegated to secondary concerns for Smith and his park staff in the spring of 1966, as the long-awaited dedication ceremonies gradually came into view. Discussions with local and state officials had begun during the fall of 1965, but the opening of the visitors center and closing of the parade grounds road had delayed completion of the "Advance Plan" until late January. Smith told his superiors in Santa Fe that "we have rounded up our supporters and feel that the matter is well in hand." He then suggested a completely contradictory mood at Fort Davis in the next sentence of his report: "Two things now hold us up . . . the date must be set and the principal speaker established before we can proceed." The Alpine and Marfa chambers of commerce had advised Smith that they only needed a few months of lead time for promotion of the event, so that "the time factor is now good." He informed the SWR director that with his experience of "roughly sixteen years of every style of National Park Service speaking assignment," the director could do no worse than to ask

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74Superintendent's Monthly Reports, October 1965; Memorandum of Smith to the NPS Director, February 11, 1966.

75Memorandum of Smith to the NPS Director, February 11, 1966; Superintendent's Monthly Reports, January, February 1966.
Smith himself to serve as master of ceremonies. But the political realities of Fort Davis, which Smith had quickly come to grasp, dictated that the NPS should invite Gene Hendryx. "The support of Mr. Hendryx will eventually be important, I am sure, to both the State Parks and the National Park Service," said the superintendent, and "apart from that, [the Alpine radio station owner] does a superb job in this sort of assignment."76

As to the issues of scheduling a date and principal speaker, Smith offered "a spring dedication, between Easter and the early part of May." The more significant dates for Fort Davis were July 4 ("Establishment Day") and October 23 (commemorating the creation in 1854 of the first fort). As the weather would affect either date, Smith preferred a time before the start of the "heavy travel season." He also canvassed the sponsors of the event for their advice on a speaker, and learned that their preference was none other than President Lyndon B. Johnson. The Democratic officials of Jeff Davis County cited as attractions for LBJ the fact that "he could use this as the beginning of a weekend at the Johnson Ranch [near Austin]," that "he is immensely popular with most of the West Texans, . . . and that his personal appearance in an election year would be of benefit to his friends here." Smith warned that "this has progressed to the point where quite honestly I fear that they will insist on inviting the Chief Executive, whether clearance from the [NPS] Washington Office and the Secretary [of the Interior] can be obtained or not." The superintendent thus characterized the LBJ groundswell as "a very difficult problem to control, and so I am forced to ask that permission be sought to invite the President."77

So that the regional office could grasp the scale of Smith's worries, he outlined the issue of security. "The president's appearance here could set off a reaction which would bring several times as many people as we could contain or control." Some two million people resided within one half-day's drive of Fort Davis ("from Alamogordo on the west to San Antonio on the east"), "and a President is a real attraction." Smith predicted that the upper limits of the park's capacity would be some 8,000 to 10,000 people, but that "a good spring weekend might bring in almost double that number." Smith personally preferred someone with slightly less drawing power, such as Interior secretary Stewart Udall, or "a military man, with the firm stamp of personal heroism upon him." This would allow the park service and local law enforcement authorities to handle the crowds themselves, resulting in less expense and strain upon the park's natural and historic resources.78

Smith's schedule for the ceremonies themselves was more mundane. He wanted the Saturday afternoon of April 30 to be the date, and the emphasis to be on "the commemoration of the Army of the West." Also recognized would be the park service's own golden anniversary, the achievements of the decade-old MISSION 66 program, and

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76 Memorandum of Smith to the SWR Director, January 27, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 26, Folder A8215a 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.
the labors of the local promoters of the park. After the dedication ceremonies themselves, Smith proposed a giant barbecue sponsored by local civic organizations, and costing a modest $1.50 per person. His rationale for this was the lack of restaurant services in town for such a crowd, and the distance that many guests would travel from home to attend the celebration. A similar problem would greet those seeking overnight accommodations, as the entire number of rooms in Fort Davis and the nearby Davis Mountain Lodge was a mere 200. "Most of the cost of the program," felt Smith, "can be covered by the sponsoring organizations, with Southwestern Monuments Association being stuck for a major portion of the bills." Smith also wished for good weather to accommodate the crowds, as "the largest indoor establishment in town," the gymnasium of the Fort Davis High School, seated only 300 people.79

For the next six weeks, Superintendent Smith and the Fort Davis staff had little idea of the final version of their dedication ceremonies. Correspondence with other NPS sites in the area reflected this, as Smith believed that he would need less than two dozen park service law enforcement personnel to handle the crowds. He also learned from the SWMA that they could not afford to spend upwards of $1,000 to subsidize the dedication activities. Then on March 10, while Smith was absent from the park, acting superintendent Bob Crisman discovered that the date had been advanced three weeks, to April 4 (itself a mere three weeks away). In addition, the speakers would include Secretary Udall and First Lady Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson. What ensued was later described by Smith in a 1994 interview as "a bloody madhouse," with Secret Service, NPS, and local political officials swarming over the Fort Davis grounds to assess the security risks and plan for Lady Bird's travel. Bob Crisman remembered attending these security sessions, and the heightened sense of anxiety coming less than three years after the assassination in Dallas of President John F. Kennedy. The Secret Service, said Crisman, was "tight-lipped," in part because of the decision by Governor John Connally, himself wounded in the Kennedy motorcade in November 1963, to come to Fort Davis with his wife. Plans were made to sweep the hillsides for snipers, and to guard against individuals climbing onto the roofs of the structures around the parade grounds.80

Soon thereafter the park received the official itinerary of Mrs. Johnson and her party. She would depart Washington on Saturday, April 2, for the Alpine airport, and would spend that day at Big Bend National Park, dedicating that NPS unit some 22 years after its creation. Then on Sunday the 3rd, the Johnson entourage would take a raft trip down the Rio Grande through scenic Mariscal Canyon. From there the Johnson party would travel by bus to Fort Davis on the morning of Monday, April 4, arriving at the park by 10:30AM. There she would be welcomed by the NPS director, George Hartzog, and would be preceded in her remarks by Secretary Udall. Her last official duty would be to unveil a bronze plaque at the visitor center, and then depart for the Alpine airport for the return trip to Austin. A large delegation from the Washington NPS office would

79Ibid.

coordinate logistics and publicity, said Cornelius Heine, NPS chief of information, and the Western Museum Laboratory "has already been instructed to expedite the exhibits for the Visitor Center," while the Eastern Museum Laboratory was to "rush the diorama scheduled for the Visitor Center."

Figure 37. Crowd in attendance at Dedication Ceremonies, April 4, 1966. Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.

81 Memorandum of Cornelius W. Heine, NPS Chief of Information, to the NPS Director, March 14, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 26, Folder A8215a.
The scale of the Johnson visit, and the haste with which the park service had to move to accommodate her party, left Superintendent Smith and the staff with little time for any other duties in late March. The security detail expanded quickly to a total of 74 uniformed officers from local, state, and federal agencies (including some 30 park rangers) from as far away as the Grand Canyon's Albright Training Center. The parks supplying law enforcement and dignitaries also asked for additional travel monies, as their own budgets could not support such costs. Cornelius Heine solicited the attendance of the U.S. Army band from Fort Bliss, appealing to the military with the promise that "this event will be one of the most important ceremonies to be held in western Texas," as well as "the first time in recent years that the First Lady has dedicated a national historic site." For good measure, the celebration "in large part, pays tribute to the Army," and Heine hoped that this would convince the military to absorb the costs of transporting the band the two hundred miles east to the park.82

The Army did indeed respond to the park service's call for help, as did all groups needed to make the dedication ceremonies a success. Monday, April 4, 1966 dawned cool but clear in the high altitude of the Davis Mountains. By 10:00AM, nearly 7,000 guests had worked their way through town to the old army post, sitting on the parade ground in anticipation of the First Lady's appearance. Music was performed by high school bands from the surrounding towns of Marfa, Alpine, Marathon and Pecos, and the Reverend Hugh Stiles of the First Baptist Church of Fort Davis gave the invocation. State representative Gene Hendryx then read the list of distinguished guests, and surrendered the podium to Superintendent Frank Smith for the "welcome to Fort Davis." George Hartzog then offered his thoughts on the meaning of the park to the nation, praising "this interpretive program at Fort Davis [as] the first of its kind in the National Park System." The NPS unit allowed visitors to "encounter a phantom of life as it existed in the 1870's, including sounds of old garrison bugle calls and retreats wafting across parade grounds like echoes from the past." This the NPS director reminded the audience was "one of the prime mandates of the National Park Service -- preserving the historic objects of our heritage for the use and enjoyment of the American people."83

Hartzog's remarks were aimed not only at the general interests of the attendees, but also at the presence of U.S. Representative Richard White, a Democrat of El Paso, and Stewart Udall, both of whom spoke after the NPS director about the importance of Fort Davis and the park system to the nation. Hartzog introduced the former Arizona congressman as "an outstanding conservationist" who had "led the way in developing a


83 Memorandum of Heine to the SWR Director, March 29, 1966; Dedication Program, Fort Davis National Historic Site, Fort Davis, TX, April 4, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 26, Folder A8215a.
program of expansion and improvement of your National Park System." The Interior secretary then linked the significance of Fort Davis' dedication to America's "continuing engagement with destiny." Quoting the philosopher Matthew Arnold, Udall saw in the park service a means to fulfill the nation's "endless expansion of its powers, [its] endless growth, [its] wisdom and beauty, that the spirit of the human race finds [as] its ideal." Catching his audience by surprise, the secretary then announced that he was awarding the first grant from the newly created "Land and Water Conservation Fund" in the amount of $515,000, to match the state of Texas appropriation for Davis Mountain State Park. Udall next turned to the guest of honor, whom he described as "one individual with us today who leads a nationwide program to retain and improve the beauty of America;" a reference to Lady Bird Johnson's campaign to remove unsightly billboards from America's highways. He then asked Mrs. Johnson to offer her remarks, which united old Fort Davis and far west Texas to the sweep of national history that she and her husband found so invigorating and worthy of remembrance.84

Speaking some five years after President John F. Kennedy had signed into law legislation creating Fort Davis National Historic Site, Mrs. Johnson linked the abandoned military post to the pioneer experiences that shaped so much of the Lone Star State and the American West. "Historic Fort Davis," she told the attentive audience, "guarded the Trans-Pecos Trails by which civilization advanced beyond the frontiers of Texas to the Rio Grande, and beyond to California." Evoking memories of romance and nostalgia, the First Lady asked her listeners in her twenty minute speech: "What better place to find out 'the nature and experiences of the men - and women - who traveled' this road?" At Fort Davis, she replied, one could find a place where those brave ancestors of Texans like herself had "found haven," where "soldiers rallied for chase and glory," and "where Kiplingesque campaigns finally ended the scourge of bold raiders out of mountain and plain".85

Lady Bird Johnson's reference to the nineteenth-century British novelist Rudyard Kipling in many ways symbolized both the fort that the visitors had come to commemorate, and the facility that the National Park Service had labored to bring back to life. "Re-created here at Fort Davis," said Mrs. Johnson, "is the physical and spiritual silhouette of an age, a place, a people." The Park Service had spent over one million dollars from 1961-1966 to create a park where "we can see where those people lived and worked;" where one could "understand - through exhibits, tours, and expert commentary - what drove them to wrest civilization from wilderness;" and in an indirect reference to

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84 "Reading Copy For Dedication of Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas, By Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson," April 4, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 26, Folder A8215a; Superintendent's Monthly Reports, April 1966.

85 "Dedication Address for Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson, Fort Davis National Historic Site, April 4, 1966," Folder A8215a, 1965-1967 FODA, RG79, NPS, Southwest Regional Office (SWR), General Administration File, 1965-1967, Box 26, Denver NARA.
The Native societies that had inhabited the Trans-Pecos "on the other side, to fight to the last against the conquering march." 86

The First Lady then turned to recognize the many groups and individuals which had contributed to the creation and restoration of that history: her husband, the powerful Texas senator, Vice-President, and then President whose clout loomed over the process of park-building; the national impulse to start the Park Service 50 years earlier; and the local sponsors the Mile High Club, the Fort Davis Historical Society, and Barry Scobee, whose faith in the past had at last been rewarded. Mrs. Johnson could not ignore the larger context of Fort Davis history, given the ongoing conflict half-a-world away in the jungles of Vietnam. But the unpleasantness of that engagement was as distant as the memories of the frontier wars fought by units of the U.S. Army in far west Texas a century and more ago, and the First Lady could note with pride that the park "is a classic example of cooperation between State and Federal agencies." 87 Davis Mountain State Park and Fort Davis had joined to "take best advantage of the resources of their neighboring parks," through a series of "interlocking trails and interpretive programs." Mrs. Johnson, aware of the awkward relationship between her fellow native Texans and the stewardship of government, closed her comments by offering Fort Davis as "a model to be emulated wherever the joining of park and recreation resources can better serve the growing needs of our growing population." 87

As the ceremonies neared their end, those in attendance realized that they had witnessed some history of their own. There had never been a gathering of that size in the town of Fort Davis (nor would there be for the next three decades), and the efforts of the NPS to orchestrate such a crowd paralleled the exertions to bring the fort back to life. Mrs. Johnson was so taken by the charm and character of the post that she delayed the ceremonies some 25 minutes so that she could read all the label copy in the new museum (called the "instant museum" because it had been completed only the night before her arrival). Frank Smith led Mrs. Johnson through the facility, and later gave Governor and Mrs. Connally a private tour. SWR director Daniel Beard reported the next day that the whole affair had been "flawless," and that "no doubt about it, the museum was a hit." He also wished to thank the Western Museum Laboratory for their design of the exhibits, and said that "Bob Utley should receive a great deal of credit" for the accuracy of his historical research. To F.H. "Pat" Ryan, Jr., of the Marfa Chamber of Commerce, Beard offered his thanks and a comment: "I have attended many dedication ceremonies at units of the [NPS] throughout the United States, but I have never attended one that was more carefully planned and gracefully executed than your ceremonies at Fort Davis." Ryan in turn congratulated the star attraction at the event, Mrs. Johnson, by noting that "your charming presence and your wonderful remarks were

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.
Figure 38. Mrs. Lady Bird Johnson addresses Dedication Ceremony audience (April 4, 1966). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
the high point of the program, and it made the day one of the most memorable of recent years for us."\(^{88}\)

Lady Bird's thoughts on the meaning of Fort Davis also touched the heart of the longtime champion of its park status, Barry Scobee, whose contributions to the ceremony did not go unnoticed. Five decades earlier, he and Carl Raht had suspected that the Davis Mountains contained a story that had national appeal, and the county justice of the peace often wondered what it would take to have such a day as that he witnessed on the first Monday in April, 1966. Scobee wrote an account of his experiences at the celebration, where Mrs. Johnson singled him out for his efforts on behalf of the park. "'You are to be congratulated on all the research required to present to posterity so valuable a book on the history of this area,'" the president's wife told him personally, and she reminded the audience to credit "'Judge Scobee, who had so much to do in getting this old fort made an historical site.'" The attention that he finally received from prominent officials like NPS director George Hartzog and Interior secretary Udall flattered Scobee, who closed his reminiscence with a typically self-deprecating story. His wife Katherine learned from a friend in Alpine that a young Hispanic woman had attended the ceremony, and had listened to Lady Bird speak of a judge who was instrumental in the success of Fort Davis. "I didn't hear his name," the woman said; "Who was he?"\(^{89}\)

\(^{88}\)Memorandum of Beard to Assistant NPS Director (Bernard) Baker, April 5, 1966; F.H. Ryan, Jr., Chairman, Program Committee, FDHS, to Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson, April 14, 1966; Beard to Ryan, April 26, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 26, Folder A8215a.

\(^{89}\)Scobee, "The Dedication Ceremony . . .," April 4, 1966, Barry Scobee Scrapbook File, FODA Library.
CHAPTER FIVE

Encounters with the Ghosts of Old Fort Davis:
Interpretation and Resource Management, 1966-1980

As Superintendent Frank Smith and his staff folded the chairs and took down the bunting from the highly successful dedication ceremonies of Fort Davis, they could take pride in the swift work of restoration at the "best preserved frontier military post" in the National Park Service. The record throng gathered on the old parade ground had been given a glimpse not only of the wonders of the past restored, but also of what the park service could accomplish when the nation's leaders provided it with sufficient resources and guidance. The next 15 years, by comparison, would witness in the Davis Mountains the challenge that the NPS faced in bringing its standards and strategies to bear upon a facility that would not attract such notoriety again, nor would it be graced with the presence of such dignitaries as the First Lady, Secretary of the Interior, and the governor of the state of Texas. Finally, the decline of fiscal support in the late 1960s and early 1970s would make Fort Davis yearn for the heady days of generous budgets, and would influence matters of administration, resource management, historic structure interpretation, and visitor services.

Where the NPS and Fort Davis promoters benefitted from the nascent liberalization of American politics in the first half of the 1960s, forces at home and abroad in the latter half of the decade shifted the nation toward more conservative and combative postures in matters of public service and financing of national parks. The escalation of the conflict in Vietnam required more monies to be diverted from domestic concerns, even as the rising casualties in Southeast Asia made many citizens suspicious of the federal government's role in public affairs. Added to this was the downturn in race relations, despite federal regulations requiring more access to employment of women and minorities. Riots in major American cities over issues of fairness and equity did not touch far west Texas, but the heritage of Fort Davis (a black post in a white ranching community with awkward relations between Anglos and Hispanics) brought home the question of balance and accuracy that would shape interpretive programs at the historic site once the "easy" work of building restoration concluded.

Fort Davis would be led by two superintendents of differing character and training in the years 1966-1980: Frank Smith, who would remain after the dedication for another five years, and Derek O. Hambly, who managed the facility from 1971-1978. The former was interested in the evocative power of the park, and worked most on its museum and retreat parade (especially its music). The latter, a naturalist and biologist by training, would be remembered by staff for his desire to delegate to his employees the course of park interpretation, and for his efforts to round out the park's boundaries and find its identity as an historic site. In neither case, however, did the Park Service place an historian in charge to guide the unit as it searched for the right combination of data and interpretation that would satisfy the varied constituency of Fort Davis: the national perspective of the NPS, the local concerns of the community, and the growing awareness by scholars of the role of race and ethnicity in public affairs and private life.
The historian Michael Kammen spoke to the problems that Fort Davis and its parent agency would have in moving through the thicket of public opinion and scholarly debate as a repository of the nation's frontier past. "The differences... between the roles of tradition and memory," said Kammen, "have less to do with what is remembered, or how traditions are transmitted, and more to do with the politics of culture, with the American quest for consensus and stability, and with the broad acceptance of the notion that government's role as a custodian of memory ought to be comparatively modest." That had not been the case in the first five years of Fort Davis' existence as a national park, but would loom large as superintendents Smith and Hambly juggled NPS directives, regional sentiments, and congressional constraints on development of a park that had enchanted so many park service professionals in its formative stages.¹

Superintendent Smith became aware of the new realities descending upon his park within days of the departure of Lady Bird Johnson and her entourage. By May 1966, Smith had been informed of the reduction of staff at Fort Davis, just as the visitor season had begun. He informed the SWR director that his park could anticipate visitation in excess of 250,000 in the next two years, given the potential for auto travel to Texas and Mexico for the 1967 San Antonio Hemisfair and the 1968 Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City. Smith also had too many facilities to supervise for the staff allocated in 1966; a year when President Lyndon Johnson reduced non-military expenditures to subsidize over 500,000 uniformed personnel stationed in Southeast Asia. Matters only worsened as Smith developed his budgets for fiscal year 1969, realizing that he could not meet the plans of the early 1960s with the funds at hand (he had hoped to have trails ready and work done on the original fort [1854-1861]).²

Concern about visitation would accelerate throughout 1967 and beyond for Smith, as each month saw increases (despite the bulge created in the records by the dedication ceremonies). Fort Davis did not charge admission in these years, nor did it have an accurate method of assessing visitor totals. Smith used a multiplier of automobiles counted in the parking lot, the average of 3.5 to 3.7 persons per car, and the number of hours estimated that each visitor spent on site. Easter Sunday 1967 set a record of 2,676 visitors, with 4,793 people coming to the park on the four-day Easter weekend. Variables like hot weather would cause declines in a particular month, but the superintendent reported to his superiors in Santa Fe that interest and attention in his park continued to grow as more individuals became aware of its existence, or stopped en route to other NPS attractions at Big Bend or Carlsbad Caverns national parks.³

¹Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 14.
Figure 39. Richard Razo (on right) and other Cooperative Education Students performing curatorial work (early 1970s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 40. Superintendent Frank Smith giving Superior Performance Award to Pablo Bencomo (July 1968). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Chapter Five

The issue of hiring at Fort Davis occupied the thoughts of Frank Smith a good deal in the spring and summer of 1966, as he looked back upon the changes that were sweeping the park service that decade. In July he offered "one man's opinions" to the NPS "Field Operations Study Team" that solicited comments from the field in response to director George Hartzog's plans to reorient the park service with new definitions of employment. Smith, a veteran of 16 years of service with the NPS, noted that his agency "is operating under the tightest economic squeeze we have ever known, in relation to workload." Factors of economic growth, population increases tied to the maturing of the postwar "baby boom," and the expansion of leisure time only exacerbated the "continuing pressure between ceilings of all types and diminishing manpower relative to new programs and new facilities," which Smith predicted "is not going to ease--rather, we may expect it to get tougher." Unlike the Great Depression, Smith did not see new funds on the horizon to meet the needs of the new parks created in the frenzy of the early 1960s. Instead, he called upon the NPS to include small parks like Fort Davis in their calculations of workload and job description, disliking the natural tendency within the agency to link all pay grades and promotions to the duties assumed at the largest NPS units. Smith also asked for a reduction in the amount of report-writing and paperwork assigned to the field; a situation he considered onerous for Fort Davis, where staff were spread thin without the support of larger parks like Grand Canyon or Yellowstone.4

What allowed Smith and the staff at Fort Davis to overcome the lack of NPS funding for personnel was the hiring of minority and youth employees through several of the 1960s' "Great Society" work initiatives. The primary program was the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), which came to the Davis Mountains-Big Bend area in the fall of 1966. Superintendent Smith wrote that September to Walter Parr, the Alpine-based director of the Big Bend Community Action Agency, encouraging him to send prospective NYC workers to Fort Davis. He considered employment at his park to be more than "routine labor." Instead the youth could engage in "the glorification of our national heritage;" a reference to the types of work needed at the park. Smith conceded that "simple maintenance" like "the brushing out of trails" would be required. Yet he could also offer them "more academic pursuits such as the cataloguing of museum specimens;" a task long delayed because of understaffing.5

Helping Smith in the task of selecting and training these youth was Pablo Bencomo, whom the superintendent praised for seeking out the "brightest and best" among community members to work at Fort Davis. Years later, Smith remembered that the NYC employees performed valuable services of maintenance and preservation, while also helping address "an obvious imbalance in the NPS" because the vast majority of Fort Davis NYC staff were Hispanic. The training process at the park differed from that


5Smith to Walter Parr, Executive Director, Big Bend Community Action Agency, Alpine, TX, September 17, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 30, Folder: A9819u Neighborhood Youth Corps 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.
offered to conventional NPS hires, however, with much emphasis on basic job skills. One example of the type of supervision required of NYC employees was the "counseling" mandated by the federal government. In training the youth to work with artifacts, Smith, Bencomo, and other full-time employees led them in discussions about "the growing need for education in the modern world, and the loss to society and the individual through leaving school." Chief NPS curator Harold Peterson came to Fort Davis from Washington in November 1966 to conduct workshops for the NYC staff on artifact preservation, and for the Fort Davis employees on how to handle the youth. Smith also recognized the role of race in the NYC program, telling his superiors in Santa Fe that the use of minority supervisors gave the Hispanic staff "a clear indication that there is no minority line drawn at Fort Davis nor in the Service." The superintendent recommended that NPS send minority park service employees to visit the NYC program to remind the youth "that they are not second-class citizens in the eyes of the Service, and that the Service does not recognize differences in this regard." 6

The impact of ethnicity on Fort Davis reached beyond federally sponsored youth employment to the park service's own personnel actions. The "imbalance" to which Superintendent Smith referred had its counterpart in the ranks of seasonal and full-time park employees, even though Fort Davis had a long history of multiculturalism as well as racial tension. To that end, Smith worked throughout his tenure as superintendent to attract blacks and Indians to the park staff: the former because of the link between the buffalo soldiers and the interpretation he wished for the park; the latter because of the need to tell the story of the Native societies who had inhabited the Davis Mountains and Trans-Pecos region, forcing the United States to erect the frontier military post in the first place. Smith recalled in 1994 how difficult it had been to bring black seasonal employees to Fort Davis in the 1960s. He traveled to Dallas and Austin to speak with guidance counselors and placement officers of historically black colleges about sending young men and women to west Texas to work for him. Other parks were conducting similar recruiting ventures, as were private corporations and public agencies eager to include minorities in their workforce. The isolation of Fort Davis thus hurt Smith's chances with urban blacks, while others disliked what they saw as "tokenism:" the employment of a handful of minorities to assuage what they considered to be "liberal guilt." A final obstacle for Smith in bringing black people into the park service was the reputation that the city of Odessa received in national news media as "the most discriminatory town in the US." Even though Odessa was 160 miles away from Fort Davis, eastern and southern blacks who knew little of the geography of west Texas believed that conditions in the oil boom town were typical of the entire region. 7

In the spring of 1967, Superintendent Smith thought that he had attracted a local college student, Ray Nelson, to come to work that summer from nearby Sul Ross

6Frank Smith interview, September 9, 1994; Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, October 10, 1967, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 31, Folder: A9819u Youth Opportunity Corps 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.

College. Nelson, who played football for the Alpine school, received instead an offer from the Dallas Cowboys professional football team to join their preseason training camp, and thus Smith lost his best chance at a black seasonal who could represent the story of the soldiers who had inhabited the post after the Civil War. Smith, however, had more success recruiting an Indian employee, Frank Chappabitty, a Comanche from Lawton, Oklahoma, who attended the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Smith had also employed Fred Peso, a senior at New Mexico State University who was a member of the Mescalero Apache tribe; the people most closely linked to the history of the Trans-Pecos. The need for Indian voices in the interpretation of the Fort Davis story eventually prompted Mary Williams and Nicholas "Nick" Bleser, both historians and rangers, to apply in 1970 for the NPS' "Indian Youth Program." This would have employed four Indian youth for 30 days to acquaint them with careers in the park service, as well as to "enlighten and educate visitors with regard to modern (and possibly historic) Indians in the course of routine conversation." 8

Despite the commitment of the NPS to hiring additional staff for the purposes of affirmative action, and Smith's desire to represent the Fort Davis story more accurately, continued reductions in operating budgets for the park service took their toll on the management of the park. In October 1968, as the Vietnam war reached traumatic levels, and the highly contentious presidential campaign moved towards closure, the park service informed Smith and his peers that there would be no new staffing for the following tourist season. Smith suggested that in order to save money for summer seasonal hires, he would close the park for two days per week that winter. This would allow the staff to handle the crush of report-writing that had accumulated during the previous summer, and also to provide visitors during the slow season with better service. In addition, Smith learned that his chief ranger, Bob Crisman, sought a transfer to a park closer to family in Carlsbad; a situation that resulted in October 1970 with Crisman leaving Fort Davis after five years of valued service. 9

Superintendent Smith noted before his departure in 1971 how important it was to continue searching for quality ethnic hires. On March 1 of that year, he wrote a confidential memorandum to the SWR director about his impending transfer to the Chamizal National Memorial in El Paso. His departure from Fort Davis provided the NPS with "one of the best possible opportunities for the assignment of a black American as superintendent in a small area." Smith considered his staff "already ethnically diverse," and operating at "a level of excellence which you will seldom find." For these reasons the "assignment of an employee who has not yet served as superintendent will create fewer problems for the employee concerned than in any other area I know." In addition, Fort Davis resided in an area that was "representative of a portion of black

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8Superintendent's Monthly Report, February, March 1967; Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, January 27, 1970, FODA Reading Files.

history which has not been given adequate exposure." Smith did warn the Santa Fe office that it would have to appoint a black career NPS employee so that "the community, before it can drop its own barriers, must be made to realize that the old stereotypes have always been in error." The departing superintendent thought that "the community does not yet realize that it is indeed ready for a move in this direction," and by appointing someone whom the locals could trust "to a job which involves the fourth largest payroll in the county and which has a wide influence in many ways will prevent the development of an adverse reaction among the majority of the people." Smith then recommended to the regional director two individuals as his replacement: John A. Carrington, a community relations specialist at the Washington NPS office; and John Troy Lissimore, the historian at Ford's Theatre in Washington. "The bigots will exist," he concluded, but selections like these could help the park service, in Smith's words, "take immediate and affirmative action" to provide Fort Davis with leadership more reflective of its historic traditions.\footnote{Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, March 1, 1971, FODA Reading Files.}

Frank Smith's awareness of the complexity of race relations in the Trans-Pecos region reflected also his sensitivity to the political nature of his park, and of the watchful eyes that local and state officials cast his way. Employment that constituted the "fourth-largest payroll" in Jeff Davis County, especially when so many minority youth were brought to the park, would not escape the attention of Anglo locals. Thus on more than one occasion, Smith had to respond to inquiries from politicians acting on behalf of constituents seeking employment at Fort Davis. The most difficult of these to address came from veterans of military service, who faced challenges finding work in the area without specialized training. U.S. Representative Richard White of El Paso, the successor to J.T. Rutherford, was approached in October 1967 by three veterans who claimed to have been rejected for positions at Fort Davis as "common labor." They claimed that those hired at the park were not veterans, nor did they have better training than themselves. "We have lived here always," said the unsigned letter from the three veterans to White, "excepting War Service." They were all "property owners and therefore Tax Payers." They believed that they were "not getting a small part of a square deal," and asked the El Paso Democrat: "Is it possible one might have to pay homage to obtain employment at this National Historic Site?"\footnote{Richard C. White, U.S. House of Representatives, to Smith, October 11, 1967; Unsigned letter to White, September 20, 1967, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 7, Folder: A3615a 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.}

White's query forced Smith to outline in detail the procedures used by the NPS to employ maintenance personnel at Fort Davis, and to calculate the military service of existing employees. The Civil Service Commission had created the process of an "Applicant Supply File," from which Smith would draw names for employment. The superintendent had advertised the file in the nearby towns of Marfa and Alpine, as well as in Fort Davis, from which he "obtained a list which includes roughly twice the number of laborers we would normally hire." The civil service rules also permitted
Smith to hire "employees of several seasons of superlative work," regardless of their veterans' status. "There also may be some concern locally," the superintendent told White, "about the hiring of five youngsters in the President's Back-to-School program." Community members thought that they were regular park service hires, not knowing of the various categories of federal employment. As for the complaint that Smith did not hire former soldiers: "Our current temporary labor crew includes three ten point veterans, seven veterans, and three non-veterans, which I think will demonstrate our good faith in this matter." "Let me assure you," Smith told White, "and your constituents, that there is no discrimination of any nature in our hiring at Fort Davis, nor will there be during my tenure as Superintendent."12

Not all of Frank Smith's interactions with Texas political figures were as difficult as employment issues. More amusing was the exchange between Representative White, Smith, and Barry Scobee about the decision by Smith to disregard Scobee's cherished tale of Indian Emily. Scobee had waited until after the April 1966 dedication ceremonies to resurrect his grievance with Smith's closure of the access road to Indian Emily's "grave." The "father of Fort Davis" first approached Texas state senator Dorsey Hardeman about the treatment that Indian Emily had received at the hands of Smith. Hardeman had also been contacted on the matter by Edward Clark, U.S. Ambassador to Australia and a west Texas history buff. Hardeman argued to Senator Ralph Yarborough that "the story of Indian Emily is so firmly established as a part of the heritage of this State, and particularly of the Davis Mountains area, that to preclude convenient public access to her grave would be to destroy a beautiful legend of our heritage." The state senator from San Angelo believed that "so little harm can come from maintaining this romantic legend that I seek your [Yarborough's] help in trying to persuade the Park Service to reopen and maintain the road up to this grave."13

By 1966, the NPS animus against Indian Emily had become part of local discontent with park service rules and regulations. Hardeman thus went beyond a request for help to suggest to Yarborough that deeper problems affected management of the site. "One of our big troubles," he told the U.S. senator, "in restoring such things as old Fort Davis is that, following such restoration, the rules and regulations prescribed by bureaucrats completely thwarts the original purpose of those who worked so hard, as did you and Slick [J.T.] Rutherford, to bring about its restoration for the benefit and enjoyment by the public." Hardeman, "like Judge Scobee," had "no quarrel with the personnel at the historic site." Yet he "sometimes doubted the wisdom of some of their acts in that they sacrifice too much for over-efficiency." He then recounted to the western history aficionado that Ambassador Clark had sent him his "research" on Indian Emily, in which he proved that "she was shot by a sentry from Shelby County with a Long Tom Rifle." "In all fairness," Hardeman conceded, "I may add that

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156 Awakening the Ghosts of Old Fort Davis: 1966-1980

some doubt has been expressed as to the authenticity of this story," but he chose not to "pursue the matter further because of my great confidence in the knowledge of Texas history possessed by our friend, the Ambassador." 14

Yarborough's response to Hardeman's plea indicated the challenge before Frank Smith and his staff to balance local tradition with park service professionalism. "Prior to receipt of your letter the end of last week," Yarborough told the San Angelo politician, "I did not know that [Indian Emily's] grave and the tradition were being treated as they are by the Park Service." He agreed to "begin work immediately to try to have this slight to one of the state's heroines, one of the great traditions of the West, one of the legends of Fort Davis, corrected." The U.S. senator was chagrined because "this legend was bigger than Fort Davis before the Park Service cut away the grave and thereby tends to bury the legend." As to the charge that "the legend cannot be proved," Yarborough replied: "I see so much history miswritten, that I am ready to believe legend as so-called history." He argued to Hardeman that "history is what the writers make it, and in the realm of national effort or individual political effort, the winners usually write the history, or they write the version that is accepted in the textbooks." He went on to claim that Indian Emily was "a legend of noble sacrifice that saved the Fort," that "there was such a person as Indian Emily," and that "since the whites who were driving out the Apaches wrote the legend, I doubt that they wrote it favorably to the defeated and driven out race." 15

Superintendent Smith recognized the depth of feeling held by west Texans toward Indian Emily, describing Scobee as Fort Davis' "severest friend and best critic." Smith told the SWR director that the former Justice of the Peace "has now begun to accuse us, evidently, of trying to suppress his favorite fairy tale." Scobee's persistence should not be discounted, said Smith, as "once before, Mr. Scobee was very much in a minority, but his efforts were to a large degree responsible for the creation of the Historic Site." Yet the superintendent believed that "it would be quite easy to spike Mr. Scobee's guns in this matter of access, by providing better information and access than we do at present, and making a considerable splash while so doing." The Fort Davis staff was preparing an "Interpretive Prospectus" that included "telling the Indian Emily legend, and presenting the facts which point towards the impossibility of the affair." This strategy would allow the staff to show that "the Service is not trying to ignore or restrict the spread of the legend." He considered the whole incident "a tempest in a teapot, in terms of the overall picture here or elsewhere." Yet "if some evidence of the Service's intentions can be presented," believed the superintendent, "it will save everyone, at all

14 Ibid.

levels, a great deal of unnecessary correspondence—probably enough to pay for a good share of the exhibit!"16

It remained for Smith to assuage the doubts of the powerful Senator Yarborough with language more diplomatic than that shared between Park Service officials tired of the Indian Emily story. To Yarborough Smith acknowledged: "We are fully aware of the place in local affections held by the Indian Emily tradition, and we regret that it is no longer as convenient as in the past for visitors to reach the grave marker." He reminded the senator that "no valid historical evidence had been found to verify the legend," but rejected the claim that "closure of the access road" was "an attempt to discourage visitors from viewing the reputed gravesite." Instead the park merely implemented NPS procedure destined to "eliminate automobiles, roads, and parking areas that in our judgment would seriously mar the historic appearance and character that the restoration program is intended to create." In 1965, Smith and his staff counted no fewer than 35,000 automobiles circling the parade grounds, creating environmental, historical, and safety hazards. The superintendent suggested that the "standard walking tour of Fort Davis, three-fourths of a mile, is not longer than that in many of our historical and scenic parks," and visitors had expressed little concern about the distance as "an unwarranted imposition." If anyone asked to see the gravesite, and could not walk under their own power, Smith had arranged for a park service vehicle to transport them the additional 500 yards beyond the standard tour route. "We realize that this is not a wholly satisfactory substitute for unrestricted vehicular access," Smith concluded, but he hoped that it was "warranted by the important benefits to be derived from excluding automobiles from the historic zone."17

Superintendent Smith's concern about the impact of the Indian Emily story on his park was not merely governmental pettiness, despite the claims of local and national politicians. He was determined to tell the Fort Davis tale as accurately as possible because of his long connection to the museum profession; a link that he cultivated assiduously during his six-year tenure at the historic site. Charlie Steen of the Southwest Region had encouraged Smith in the 1950s to join local and national associations that focused upon museum interpretation and visitor services, as a way to advance the professionalism of the park service and keep the organization attuned to changes in the museum business. Smith thus joined the Mountains-Plains Museum Association, serving on its board of directors from 1966-1970, at which time he became association president for one year. He also edited the Texas museum newsletter, and sat for eight years on the prestigious American Association of Museum's council. This explained his work with Bob Utley to represent Fort Davis carefully in its visitors center. It also permitted Smith to advance the cause of racial understanding through the museum at Fort Davis. In a 1971 letter to Milton Perry, museum curator for the National Archives and Records

16Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, September 7, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 55, Folder: K1817 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.

Service at the Harry S Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, the Fort Davis superintendent spoke of the importance of NPS sites addressing cultural issues. "Our experience at Fort Davis," said Smith, "has clearly shown that even a modest assemblage of material on a single aspect of a minority's experience in the United States of the last century can be of significant assistance to scholars, with the limitations on collections more than balanced by the concentration in a single field." Smith also started the process of NPS consultation with the proposed frontier military museum in San Angelo, known as "Fort Concho." "Within a few years," the superintendent told Mrs. R G. Ross of San Marino, California, in 1968, "it may rival Fort Davis as one of the best of the western Military posts--thereby providing the sort of competition which will keep us all active and working towards the best possible visitor services!"\(^\text{18}\)

Advising other museums in the Trans-Pecos area was not the most dramatic of Frank Smith's outreach efforts on behalf of the park service. In 1966 the NPS asked him to serve as "keyman" for the planned Chamizal National Memorial in southeast El Paso. President Lyndon Johnson, whose patronage had meant so much to the creation of Fort Davis, had also sought to advance the cause of international cooperation between the United States and Mexico. In 1963 he had urged the NPS to develop plans for a park that, rather than glorifying the conquest of the Southwest by the U.S. Army in 1846, would demonstrate how on a daily basis two cultures shared a common boundary, environment, and economy. Within three years the Fort Davis superintendent, as the NPS official closest to the proposed site on the Rio Grande, began attending meetings in El Paso designed to link the efforts of the federal governments of the two countries, along with the city of El Paso and its school district, to realize Johnson's dream of cultural harmony.\(^\text{19}\)

Smith divided his time between managing the affairs of Fort Davis and commuting the 220 miles by car to the west Texas city of El Paso. His work at an historic site that had undergone substantial construction excited Smith with the possibility (one that few NPS superintendents ever had) to shape the future of a second unit of the park service. Determined also to fulfill LBJ's dream of a new order in ethnic relations along the U.S.-Mexican border, Smith spent a good deal of time acquainting himself with the distinctive ecology, economics, and cultural complexity of the larger Rio Grande basin. Among these efforts was his request to his superiors to fund a Spanish language training course for himself at the NPS' Albright Training Center at the Grand Canyon, and the use of Fort Davis' Hispanic employees at Chamizal. He would take his chief of maintenance, Pablo Bencomo, with him on occasion to El Paso, as Smith admired his

\(^{18}\)Frank Smith interview, September 9, 1994; Smith to Milton F. Perry, Museum Curator, National Archives and Records Service, Harry S Truman Library, Independence, MO, January 5, 1971; Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, February 8, 1971, FODA Reading Files; Smith to Mrs. R.G. Ross, San Marino, CA, January 26, 1968, Administrative History Files, FODA Library.

\(^{19}\)Frank Smith interview, September 9, 1994; Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, March 14, 1968, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1968-1970, Box 120, Folder: D22a 1968-1970 FODA, Denver NARA.
skills at construction and personnel management. Eventually, Smith asked Bencomo to work full-time at Chamizal, offering him a higher pay grade at the much-better funded urban park. Bencomo, however, declined the invitation, as he planned to retire one day and live in his hometown of Fort Davis. Smith also brought to Chamizal Richard Razo, a former NYC staffer of the 1960s at Fort Davis, to serve as ranger. In addition, he linked programs of films and education between the two parks, and at times utilized Fort Davis funds for Chamizal purposes when appropriations for the latter were delayed.²⁰

By dividing his time between Fort Davis and El Paso, Frank Smith could not devote all of his attention to either site; a situation that the Southwest Region corrected in August 1971 by transferring Derek O. Hambly from Padre Island National Seashore to the old military post. His background as a naturalist differed from Smith’s work in museums and historical interpretation. For that reason Hambly deferred to his staff's expertise in history, which proved fortuitous because of the presence in the early and mid-1970s of several ranger-historians: Mary Williams, Nick Bleser, and Doug McChristian. Williams first came to Fort Davis in 1969 as a seasonal hire, with a

Figure 41. Superintendent Derek Hambly. Courtesy Mrs. Aggie Hambly.

²⁰Frank Smith interview, September 9, 1994; Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, April 23, 1968, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1968-1970, Box 92, Folder: A4017a 1968-1970 FODA, Denver NARA; Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, March 6, 1970; Memorandum of Smith to Superintendent, Big Bend National Park (BIBE), July 5, 1971, FODA Reading Files.
master's degree in colonial U.S. history from the University of Connecticut. Bleser would serve as the "supervisory park ranger" until 1972, replaced by McChristian, the recipient of a history degree from Fort Hays State College in western Kansas. Bleser had developed the first "living history" program at Fort Davis, and wanted someone dedicated to this form of historical representation that had become popular in the 1960s.21

Superintendent Hambly faced the same issues of budget reductions, hiring practices, and community relations that had bedeviled Frank Smith in the years after the park dedication. His supervisory park ranger, Nick Bleser, set the tone for the 1970s when he wrote in January 1972 to James White of Phoenix, Arizona, who sought information about employment in the park service. Calling the situation "bleak," Bleser told White that "we have recently been ordered to cut back on approximately 500 permanent positions within the Service." This extended to promotions, which were "pretty much at a standstill." As for applicants for permanent positions, "[those] who have passed the Federal Service Examination with scores of 95 or better number in the thousands," while "we have already received more applications for summer employment during the past week than we received in several months of last year." Continued efforts by the administration of President Richard Nixon to reduce what was then considered "rampant" inflation (five percent) and federal spending led Bleser to conclude: "We have nothing here, and the whole outlook throughout the National Park System is rather grim."22

Because of the pressure to find employment in the face of continuing budget cuts, even the federally sponsored youth and minority programs came under close scrutiny. Alex Olivas wrote to Representative Richard White in July 1972, asking that his son Danny be hired at Fort Davis as a summer seasonal. It seemed that Danny Olivas had thought he would work at the post, only to discover that he was assigned to the nearby Davis Mountains State Park. In an interesting twist on race relations in the Trans-Pecos region, Alex Olivas charged that Hambly had hired Mexican nationals rather than his native-born son. "We hire our youths," said Bleser, "on an unbiased, combined balance of ability, interest and economic need." The youths whom Alex Olivas had challenged were American citizens of native-born Mexican parents. "We wish it were possible," Bleser wrote to White, "to hire every kid in town full-time permanently." The park informed the El Paso congressman that "we invite and welcome criticism," and believed that the Olivas inquiry demonstrated that "this must be a successful program and a good place to work if people are fighting to get in."23

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21Interview with Mary Williams, Supervisory Park Technician, FODA, January 5, 1995; Interview with Doug McChristian, Historian, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, MT, October 5, 1994.

22Nicholas J. Bleser, Supervisory Park Ranger, FODA, to James C. White, Flagstaff, AZ, January 5, 1972, FODA Reading Files.

23Bleser to Alex Olivas, Fort Davis, TX, July 24, 1972, FODA Reading Files.
While the youth programs appeared healthy at Fort Davis, Superintendent Hambly had fewer kind words for the change in status of rangers undertaken by the NPS in light of budget cuts. In September 1972, Hambly wrote disparagingly to the Southwest Region of the decision made in Washington to shift many positions from professional to technical status. This permitted the NPS to hire individuals with lesser educational and employment credentials, and to pay them reduced salaries. Fort Davis also could not permit the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) in 1972 to maintain a camp on the grounds. "I would not want to commit my staff to this program," Hambly informed the SWR director, "unless we have assurances that the money is available for the camp construction or improvement." Then in March 1973, the superintendent learned that the U.S. Department of Labor would no longer fund the NYC program for the park service. Hambly did note that the NYC would try to continue its recruitment of American Indian youth. While his park could use employees with such ethnicity, he realized that the heavily Hispanic population of the Fort Davis area meant that "the insertion of more manpower into the area from outside sources would not be in the best interests of the local program." 24

While Derek Hambly could not solve the problem of declining revenues for summer employment, he did receive good news about local relations in April 1973, when Robert Utley nominated Barry Scobee for the "National Park Service Honorary Park Ranger Award." As the NPS champion of creating Fort Davis National Historic Site, Utley commended the former justice of the peace "for encouraging tourism into the region and awakening public awareness of, in particular, the national historical significance of Fort Davis." "Mr. Scobee's remarkable knowledge of history," Utley wrote, "gathered during more than a half century of research, has contributed immeasurably to our understanding of the history of both Fort Davis and Big Bend National Park." Utley, who wrote a good deal about the old frontier military post himself, further praised Scobee: "Without his knowledge and assistance--and his eagerness to answer any call for advice or information--our grasp of the region's history would be much weaker." Scobee's "contributions to the Service, to the people of the United States, and to the cause of historic preservation," said the NPS director of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, meant that the longtime historian of the Davis mountains would be recognized by the agency that had benefitted from his 40 years of advocacy. 25

Robert Utley's nomination of Judge Scobee found a receptive ear in Washington, where the NPS agreed to honor the "father" of Fort Davis with its honorary ranger

24Memorandum of Derek O. Hambly, FODA Superintendent, to SWR Director, September 21, 1972, FODA Reading Files; Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1971-1973, Box 207, Folder: A9819a 1971-1973 FODA Youth Conservation Corps, Denver NARA; Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1971-1973, Box 204, Folder: A9819c 1971-1973 FODA NYC, Denver NARA.

25Memorandum of Utley to Special Programs Coordinator, NPS Division of Program Evaluation and Development, April 27, 1973, FODA Reading Files.
award. Scobee, whose relationship with Bob Utley had been strained by the latter’s skepticism over the Indian Emily legend, nonetheless thanked the former SWR regional historian for his "fine, tiptop, superb, and superexcellent recommendation for me." The judge considered it "an honor indeed, and a flower in my lapel for my many remaining years--I'm only 88." Scobee, who had since moved to a nursing home in Kerrville, Texas, could take pride in the high-level NPS recognition of his efforts. "Your labor of a long lifetime," said Utley in a letter to Scobee, "has borne rich fruit in Fort Davis National Historic Site and it is only proper that your achievements have been acknowledged." Four years later, upon the announcement of Scobee's death (March 18, 1977) at the age of 91, Superintendent Hambly spoke for many within and outside the park service when he wrote to Frank Mentzer, public affairs officer for the Southwest Region: "The town of Fort Davis, and those staff members of Fort Davis National Historic Site that were privileged to know him, will always remember Mr. Scobee and his contributions to the historical heritage of this area and to the people of the United States of America."26

Where Superintendent Hambly had nothing but praise for Judge Scobee, his attitude towards the conditions of employment changed as the decade of the 1970s advanced. For his fulltime staff, Hambly complained about the lack of funds for travel, housing, and failure of the NPS to maintain cost-of-living standards. For the youth programs, however, Hambly began to echo the growing conservatism in the nation and within the NPS about continued reliance upon these "Great Society" social welfare programs. "For the last three years," Hambly wrote to the SWR director in July 1974, "I have been utilizing the subject programs that I inherited from the former administration of this area." Frank Smith's successor conceded that "we have received a significant amount of relatively cheap benefits from the [youth] program," but Hambly was "not . . . at all satisfied that the overall benefits are justifying the time and energy it takes to administer the program."27

What had triggered the superintendent's retreat from Smith's commitment to minority hiring was his discontent with the current group: "Youngsters that were barely fourteen years of age in some cases." Such employees were "too young to deal with the public effectively," said Hambly, and they were also "too juvenile to entrust with other chores such as cleaning and caring for artifacts." Even when assigned to the information desk, the superintendent complained, "it was necessary to have an older person with them at all times." Compounding Hambly's personnel problems was the fact that "the YOSSC program was supposed to have been primarily for those who were interested in going on to college." Over time the "financial limitations of the program" had caused Hambly to "pick them [the student hires] primarily from former NYC ranks." This created the belief in town that "we are expected to supply jobs automatically," resulting in "a lack


27Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, July 22, 1974, FODA Reading Files.
of incentive and the attitude that the positions are a right rather than a privilege." From this, said Hambly, came "a degree of irresponsibility and idleness." The superintendent's corrective was "phasing out the [NYC] program in favor of hiring college students who we believe to be more responsible and more able to relate to the public." These he identified as students "from the local college [Sul Ross] in conjunction with the recently completed contract there." 28

In the summer of 1974 Superintendent Hambly assessed the value of recruiting ethnic minorities in any capacity at his park. "While black history is a part of the total story at Ft. Davis," he reported to the SWR regional personnel officer, "it is only a part and not the whole ball of wax." Hambly had asked Sul Ross placement officials to "look for at least one black student to work in the cooperative education program." Whether Sul Ross had any such students, the superintendent informed his regional superiors: "I am not going out of my way to hire black students just because black troops were at the Fort for a period of time." Reflecting the national mood of discontent with the liberal demands of the preceding decade, Hambly further stated: "Neither am I going out of my way to hire chicanos or anglos or any other ethnic group." Rejecting the argumentation of his predecessor, Hambly contended that "we have enough worthy students of all denominations here to do the job we need to do." Thus he saw little value in making "a special effort to recruit just black students other than the effort we have already mentioned." 29

As for his NPS-funded employees, Hambly spent a good portion of his tenure in the 1970s battling to resist the slide in working conditions and morale that eventually prompted the systemwide report entitled, *State of the Parks-1980*. Pay raises were few and far between, and housing in the Fort Davis area worsened as the Trans-Pecos region witnessed the oil boom that occurred in response to the quintupling of crude oil prices during the twin "embargoes" and "energy crises" of 1973 and 1979. The region had what was considered the finest crude oil in the nation (West Texas Intermediate Sweet Crude) that rivalled the quality of the Persian Gulf Arab nations that forced energy prices to rise exponentially. The situation for housing and other social services throughout west Texas grew more competitive with the high salaries paid to white collar and production workers alike, and in 1976 the NPS sent to the Fort Davis-Big Bend area a team of observers led by former Fort Davis superintendent Michael Becker to assess the crisis of living costs. Hambly took exception to Becker's decision to use housing prices and wages from Fort Stockton as the baseline data for his study, as he preferred nearby Marfa as more reflective of the situation in Fort Davis. The superintendent considered the difference crucial, as he would have to seek in the next budget the additional funds

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28Ibid.

29Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Personnel Officer, September 10, 1974, FODA Reading Files.
to match these higher costs of living; a situation that might jeopardize his requests for monies to correct other pressing problems of maintenance and operations.  

In matters of community relations, Superintendent Hambly’s concerns about offending the Anglo majority in the region with minority hiring did him little good when charged by county commissioners with conspiring with federal officials to close the town garbage dump. For the first dozen years of its existence, the park had taken its trash to the open dump on the historic site property, where it was incinerated. In March 1973, the Southwest Region learned from the Texas Air Control Board that NPS use of such dumps at Fort Davis and Lake Meredith were not in compliance with federal and state clean-air regulations. Hambly became upset when he learned that other state agencies in the area, as well as local citizens, continued to use the dump, when the NPS had to pay the cost of transporting its refuse the sixty-five mile roundtrip to Alpine. The superintendent complained to local and state officials of this oversight, leading the Texas Air Control Board in the spring of 1975 to close the Fort Davis dump to all users. This led the county commissioners’ court in July to call Hambly before them to inform him of their intent "to write a letter to my supervisor asking that I be removed as Superintendent." Hambly went before County Judge Wanda Adams with documents from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Texas Air Control Board explaining the problem. "Evidently," Hambly told the SWR director, "the Commissioner[s] are locked into the idea that I am meddling in affairs that are of no concern to me." They wanted to know "by what right I had to complain about the dump," and whether the superintendent "knew what the cost would be to relocate the dump." Hamby managed to elicit from his accusers the concession that "they had not explored that facet [funding a new dump] either and one commissioner stated that they had been aware of the problem for five years." The superintendent then "pointed out that personal attacks on me would not alleviate the problem, that there were other avenues to examine, and that such organizations as the newly formed Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce and the West Texas Council of Governments were two possible sources of ideas."  

As if the garbage dump issue were not enough to tax Hambly’s patience, the U.S. Air Force in March 1978 sent to Fort Davis two officers from Holloman Air Force Base in southern New Mexico to "gather preliminary data in preparation for a possible impact statement concerning supersonic training flights over portions of west Texas." The Air Force itself had not extended the courtesy of informing Hambly of its intentions, as the superintendent had to learn of the potential overflight problem from members of the Fort Davis chamber of commerce and the McDonald Observatory. Thus Hambly had to write to Brigadier General William Strand of Holloman that "many of these buildings are
fragile and could be affected by shock waves from sonic booms." The military had already established a pattern of such flights over the NPS' White Sands National Monument, some 300 miles northwest in the Tularosa basin of New Mexico. Hambly thus sought to avoid the difficulties that White Sands had earlier experienced with its Air Force neighbors during the height of training for the war in Vietnam. Said Hambly to Strand: "This office must do everything in its power to avoid any possibility of damage to these irreplaceable structures of national importance." The Fort Davis superintendent needed from Strand "assurance that the type of training area discussed by your officers during their visit would be far enough from Fort Davis National Historic Site so that no chance of damage from sonic shock waves would be possible."

The best that the Air Force could promise Derek Hambly was to move its training area some 15.5 miles away from Fort Davis. The military in the years after Vietnam had begun to look for larger sections of land in which to prepare soldiers for war, especially with the focus upon air defense that required vast stretches of open space for the high-technology aircraft being designed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Hambly told his superiors in Santa Fe that "I know that a sonic boom can travel more than fifteen miles under the proper conditions." He had learned that "there is some indication that an excess of 150 sonic booms per day would be striking the ground," and that "there might be an overwhelming opposition to the noise that these training operations would create." Fearing "noise pollution" as well as "damaging vibration" from the training program, Hambly again asked the Southwest Region: "Since the National Park Service has had experience with sonic noise at other areas, perhaps such expertise will be able to determine if 15.5 statute miles is enough space" to protect his park from Air Force intrusion.

Hambly's efforts to protect his historic resource consumed much of his time in the last years of his superintendency (1978-1979). In May 1979, Colonel Richard L. Meyer, commander of Holloman AFB, wrote to Wayne Cane, acting SWR director, to inform him of the continued planning for what the Air Force called the "Valentine Military Operations Area." Meyer's staff had prepared a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the program, and had agreed to "address specific Air Force actions that have been taken to preclude a sonic boom impact upon the town of Fort Davis and the National Historic Site." This did little to satisfy concerned local residents, who approached Representative Richard White at the July 4 celebration at Fort Davis with calls to restrict the Air Force's reach into the Davis Mountains. White surprised his constituents by saying that "he did not think he could stop the proposal, nor was he inclined to do so," citing as his rationale to the Alpine Avalanche his belief "in 'the defense of America, and we must all make sacrifices.'" Instead White advised the Jeff


33 Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, March 29, 1978, FODA Reading Files.
Davis County contingent to "pursue a lawsuit to block the flights." He acknowledged that "the Air Force has refused to honor claims of damages to homes unless residents could document the exact time of day the booms occurred." White did promise to try to get the Air Force to move the flights, but he did not think that alternative sites over the Gulf of Mexico (a long distance from the pilots' home base in southern New Mexico) would appeal to the military.34

Derek Hambly would leave Fort Davis in the fall of 1979, still unable to gain from the Air Force any promises of protection. Nor was he able to resolve the conflict with Jeff Davis County about the offending garbage dump. These would be issues left to his successor, William F. Wallace, the superintendent of Capitol Reef National Monument in southeastern Utah, with whom Hambly traded positions. Wallace, who would stay at Fort Davis for less than one year, informed the Santa Fe regional office soon after arrival in west Texas that his major concerns for the future of park included "the possibility of U.S. Air Force overflights in the immediate future," while "the continuation of the routine burning of the local community garbage dump creates an air pollution and odor problem as prevailing winds saturate the entire Fort area during periods when the dump is burned." To this Wallace added the old concern of "developments/construction on private lands immediately to the South of the Fort [that] could create an adverse effect due to the close proximity of the main Fort structures."35

Because most of the critical questions of park planning had been addressed by the late 1960s at Fort Davis, it remained for the staff hired by the superintendents to implement ideas fashioned in the heady days of the park's creation. This suited the management styles of Frank Smith and Derek Hambly, as well as the procedures established by the NPS to rely upon qualified personnel to fulfill the mandates of the particular enabling legislation of a park unit. Thus it is instructive to analyze the three major categories of daily life at Fort Davis (facility security and maintenance, historic structure rehabilitation, and visitors services) through the efforts of the employees from 1966-1980. These included, but were not limited to, the work of Pablo Bencomo and his maintenance crew, and the historical research and program development of Benjamin Levy, Mary Williams, and Doug McChristian. The staff had to engage both the idiosyncracies of regional and community perspectives on the park, the dictates of NPS program and policy regulations, and the trends in historical scholarship that sought to realign the western story with that of the "new social" history of the 1960s and 1970s, focusing upon the role of ethnicity, gender, and environment as factors in the development of America's western frontier. How the park service in general, and Fort Davis staff in particular, met these objectives says much about the challenge of national organizations to change themselves, and to speak clearly to local constituencies more


35 Memorandum of William F. Wallace, FODA Superintendent, to SWR Director, November 23, 1979, FODA Reading Files.
enamored of what Michael Kammen aptly referred to as the "mystic chords of memory" that history can provide.

Visitor safety at Fort Davis faced several hurdles in the early years of park management. The extensive repairs and alterations of structures left areas where unsuspecting patrons could harm themselves, and the potential for falling debris and walls was ever present. So too was the prospect of vandalism or damage to the structures after hours. To control these factors, the park required that rangers live on the premises (first in the old officers quarters, then in the new compound on the east side of the park). Superintendent Frank Smith also did not have a chief of law enforcement, given the small staff on hand. Thus he had to rely upon the assistance of local sheriffs, and upon the distant U.S. Commissioner's courts in El Paso or Odessa (ironically, the nearby Marfa commissioner lacked jurisdiction in Jeff Davis County). When the mostly minor cases of vandalism and trespass were uncovered at the park, the staff also discovered that local courts were too busy to handle them. Smith and his employees thus had to work with law enforcement officials as best they could to bring the park under the protection of area officers and judges.\[36\]

Soon after his arrival at Fort Davis in the fall of 1971, Derek Hambly assessed the law enforcement policies of his new park and decided to update them in light of his experiences at a heavily visited national seashore (Padre Island). Hambly chose to furnish his rangers with firearms while on active duty, but to restrict their use only to cases where "a fleeing felon may be shot at after he has been commanded to halt, even if such shooting results in death to him." The superintendent also impressed upon his rangers the fact that "they may become subject to serious administrative or judicial actions if they misuse their authority." Hambly believed that he and the supervisory park ranger-historian would be the only personnel involved in law enforcement, but that the inability of the local sheriff to respond quickly to an emergency would require the carrying of weapons by these two individuals. Even though "the overwhelming majority of visitors to the area," said Hambly, "are genuinely interested in the historical aspects of the area," and "problems have been almost non-existent," he noted that the park handled admissions fees for some 100,000 visitors per year. In addition, the book exhibits in the visitors generated some $7,000 for the Southwest Parks and Monuments Association. These might tempt someone to rob the park, as would the wealth of historical artifacts and the "collection of guns, many in working order, that might be attractive targets for thieves." He also reported that Fort Davis' proximity to Mexico brought illegal aliens into the vicinity, as well as narcotics traffic (primarily marijuana). To balance visitor security with the desire not to frighten patrons, Hambly decided to have his staff only wear their weapons when conditions dictated, and to require mandatory training once per year, with individual target practice undertaken every three months.\[37\]

\[36\] Memorandum of Smith to SWR Division of Legislation and Regulations, July 5, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 75, Folder: W3419 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.

\[37\] Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, December 7, 1971, FODA Reading Files.
In matters of building security, the superintendents worried most about the damage caused by fire. The high volume of dry brush accumulating in such an arid climate could harm not only the range and outlying structures, but also the valuable contents collected for deposit in the visitor center and museum. To that end, chief ranger Bob Crisman developed a working relationship between the park staff, the Davis Mountains State Park, and the volunteer fire department of the town of Fort Davis, to protect the natural and historic resources at the post. This included by 1969 a 100-gallon tank, 10 fire hoses, 35 portable fire extinguishers, and "a well stocked cache of hand tools for grass and brush fires." All park personnel were expected to respond to fire emergencies, and would be trained under NPS regulations. This was because the response time from local organizations could be lengthy: 30-45 minutes for the Fort Davis town volunteers, and over one hour for the McDonald Observatory fire-fighting team. One additional burden for staff in fire management was the fact that the park could not afford to hire a night watchman. Thus the three families living in the housing compound would have to be on alert for fires on site in the evening, and to bear the brunt of early firefighting should a conflagration break out.38

The issue of fire had a restorative as well as debilitating feature for the park service, and in 1972 the regional office asked Superintendent Hambly to develop a plan for "prescription fires" to "manipulate vegetation towards a definite objective, i.e., fuel reduction, removal of undesirable vegetation, favoring desirable vegetation cover in an area, etc." Hambly's staff conducted preliminary research into the history of fire at the site, and led the superintendent to write his superiors: "We are at a loss to understand how fire management could be incorporated into the total operation of Fort Davis." Their reasoning was that "we have no indication, historically or otherwise, that the historic or natural scene was dependent upon fire." Hambly agreed that the Historic Resources Management Plan and Historic Studies Management Plan of April 1971 had indicated the presence of intruding vegetation. Yet he did not approve of "controlled burning" to eradicate this. Prior to the creation of the park, cattle grazing brought to the area mesquite and other brush that posed fire hazards. Yet these had been removed by hand since the early 1960s, and the prohibition on grazing kept the growth from returning. The park also had areas surrounding the historic structures mowed regularly to reduce their potential for fire. Hambly concluded: "Deliberate management of undesired vegetation through fire could only be effected in a small area, and such fires would endanger certain historical structures and would leave a blackened area for a year unless there was heavy precipitation in which case growth would then be lush and little would have been accomplished."39


The only other source of structural damage to buildings and grounds at Fort Davis was the unlikely occurrence of flash flooding. In June 1974, the staff prepared for Superintendent Hambly an "Emergency Operation Plan" that included the response strategies for such an event. The report noted that Fort Davis still relied upon the historic diversion ditches and canals built in the late-nineteenth century to carry water around the post structures as it flowed from Hospital Canyon down to Limpia Creek. The staff hypothesized that flash flooding, while not in the recent memory of local residents, could be of substantial enough proportions to overwhelm the ditch system, resulting in severe damage to the historic site. Nothing of this nature occurred in the first three decades of the park's existence, but Fort Davis witnessed in October 1978 an indication of the power of nature in the arid West. In September of that year the park received some seven inches of rain over the course of six days, with 2.85 inches of that falling within one 24-hour period. Superintendent William Wallace reported to the Southwest Region that "the adobe walls in the historic structures without roof covers became saturated from direct rain and ground percolation." This in turn "disintegrated some previously stabilized sections of wall and/or foundations resulting in the loss of some complete wall structures and a large portion of one two-story building." Wallace thus asked the regional office to send a repair crew immediately, since "other structures were weakened to the point where additional rainfall or winds could result in loss of the entire walls or buildings." 40

Of less concern than natural disasters, but equally important for management of the park, was resolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s of the boundaries of Fort Davis. Regional officials in July 1968 discovered that the NPS had not acquired all lands within the defined boundaries of the park, and asked Superintendent Frank Smith to determine how to gain control of some 12.64 acres still in private hands. Bob Crisman responded to the regional directive by researching the purchase records, learning that some $5,000 of the original allocation made in 1961 had not been paid to the Simmons/Jackson family. The chief ranger noted that "land prices in the area vary from $40 per acre to $1,000 per acre, depending on the size, quality, and location of the parcels involved." The acreage in question was in Hospital Canyon, which Crisman described as "rough, rocky terrain . . . with little or no development potential and little grazing value." He thus recommended that the NPS offer no more than $50 per acre, and the "top price should be under $1,000 and probably around $750.00." 41

Crisman's research motivated the regional office to examine its options for acquisition of the Fort Davis inholding, with only $1,900 remaining from the original land-purchase fund to be applied to the parcel. The acting chief of the NPS' Office of


Land and Water Rights wrote to Superintendent Smith in August 1968, stating that this sum "would not go very far in securing a survey, having the tract appraised, obtaining title evidence, and title insurance policy, as well as paying the landowner the value of the land." Washington office records also indicated that "there is approximately three acres of land within the boundaries owned by Mr. H.E. Sproul." The NPS official thus suggested to Smith that he entertain with Sproul the possibility of sale, believing that the park service could acquire the extra funds for purchase. Bobby Crisman thus met with Clifford Harriman of the NPS Lands Division in September 1968, reporting that "after two days of work with him we have successfully negotiated a donation of the 12.64 acre inholding on our west boundary." The land had been owned not by Mr. Sproul, but by longtime rancher J.W. Espy. Because of the expenses involved, and the need for Fort Davis to control the acreage, Crisman convinced Mr. Espy that donating property that he could no longer graze with any effectiveness was in the best interests of all parties. This left only a parcel along the south boundary owned by M.H. Sproul that could be acquired by private developers, and Superintendent Hambly believed that the rancher would not jeopardize the neighboring national or state parks.42

Concern about the precise boundaries of Fort Davis had been spark in part by initiatives taken in the late 1960s to focus more upon the natural and ecological resources of the park; a situation that had been somewhat neglected because of the high profile of historical research in the park’s early years. Frank Smith had begun work in October 1966 to link the Tall Grass and North Ridge Nature Trails shared by the Davis Mountains State Park and Fort Davis. The state park would have a series of trailside panels that "present the botanical facts, and the principal coverage of ecology." Once hikers crossed onto NPS land, "they will find that the labels deal with the reaction of people to the plants, and with facts and sometimes philosophical comments about them." Smith had no naturalists on staff, and thus had to ask the regional office to identify and suggest language for the label copy on the trail signs. Smith also paid attention to regional directives regarding wildlife. "Wildlife viewing by visitors," Smith informed the SWR director, "is generally limited to a few insects and an occasional snake." He thus wondered if Fort Davis had anything to offer the team of regional naturalists who wanted to visit Carlsbad Caverns, Big Bend, Guadalupe Mountains, and Fort Davis as part of a larger study of Chihuahuan Desert ecology.43


Park Service officials concerned about the plant and animal life of the Davis Mountains did come to Fort Davis in the early- and mid-1970s to discuss plans to rid the area of pests, and to protect the aging cottonwood grove that had served so many generations of Fort Davis residents as a picnic grounds. Derek Hambly decided to build at the park a small herbarium, which by 1975 contained "253 species representing 64 families." The former Padre Island naturalist wanted his staff to discover "what connection any of [the species] might have with the historic aspects of the area." The superintendent believed that "pioneers, military units, and native Indians used plants for food, medicines, decorations or building materials." Yet his own studies indicated that "except for those areas directly concerned with Indian history," there was "little if anything said about the role [that] plants played in the settling of the country." Hambly wanted "the identification of plants that are of historical importance [to] be made a part of each Historical Resource Management Plan." He also hoped that "some attention [would] be paid to including plant uses into interpretive displays and programs of areas other than those concerned with Indian history." 44

Ecological studies also extended to the increased usage of water at Fort Davis, especially the declining rate of recharge of the park's main water wells. After seven years of visitation and construction work Superintendent Smith had reported in September 1970 that "each year the water level seems to take longer to recover after the summer season." That particular summer the park staff "had some doubt for a few days as to whether or not the well was going to maintain a pumping rate high enough to meet the heavy visitor use." Smith had his staff study the problem, and reported to the regional office that "there seems to be a possibility that the well which provides water for the Fort Davis town system may be draining water from below us." Drawdown had reached only five feet above the pump, and "already this spring [1971] the pump has gone into a cycling pattern at least once, repeatedly drawing down the water to the point of cutoff before refilling the tank." A similar shortage the previous year had not occurred until "well into the summer months," leading the staff to conclude that "it is a harbinger of trouble this summer, when irrigation and visitor demands treble the current water needs." A deeper well would not suffice if the park could not expand the storage capacity of the existing tank (50,000 gallons), and Smith further noted that "there is little possibility of obtaining water from the city system without considerable expense." 45

Given the centrality of water to visitor comfort and staff operations at Fort Davis, the NPS moved quickly to address Smith's concerns about the park's need for more water storage capacity. In May 1971, Donald C. Barrett, hydrologist with the NPS'
Western Service Center in San Francisco, came to Fort Davis to examine the status of well-drilling. Barrett spoke with Pablo Bencomo about the history of water problems at the park, and then traveled to Alpine to discuss the matter with the contractor who had installed the original pumping equipment at Fort Davis. The NPS hydrologist undertook a series of tests, compared his findings to the records of water storage and use at the park, and concluded: "There is little doubt . . . that a steady decline in the capacity of the well has occurred due to the lowering of the regional water table." This caused the pump to switch on and off more frequently, threatening the system with electrical failure. Barrett speculated that climatic changes in the Davis Mountains area were in part to blame for the loss of water, but he still encouraged the NPS to plan for additional drilling, perhaps in the northeast corner of the park, which had been identified recently by a geologist from the University of Texas at El Paso, Dr. E.M.P. Lovejoy. The latter was conducting a survey of the geology of far west Texas for the state government, and contended that drawing water from that sector of the site would "take advantage of any recharge from the nearby river."  

The cost of drilling a well at Fort Davis, and the uncertainty of water quality in the immediate area, led the NPS in 1971 to approach the town of Fort Davis to initiate a contract to provide the Park Service with both water and sewer services. Superintendent Smith noted the high cost of connecting the park to the municipal water system ($3,200), which could be balanced against the low rates for water delivery (50,000 gallons per month at the rate of 45 cents per thousand gallons). Also prompting Smith's call for purchase of town water was the continued decline of the Fort Davis water table, which he described in June 1971 as "going down at a rate of 75 to 100 gallons production per day." The crisis conditions had led the superintendent to rent a gas generator to pump water from the "old church camp well, which might provide enough water to keep the fire control supply in the storage tank." Park service regulations required Fort Davis to retain a reserve for firefighting, which Smith described as "less than 36,000 gallons, or about one hour's fire fighting time at full capacity." Without additional moisture that summer, Smith feared that "the emergency is growing a little greater every day," and that the most expedient solution was to purchase water from town at once.

Water conservation became more urgent as the decade of the 1970s brought to west Texas the international energy crisis, spawned by the decision of several Arab oil-producing nations to quintuple the price of petroleum in response to the victory in 1973 of the state of Israel in its war with Egypt. While the escalation of prices benefitted the "oil patch" of west Texas (even as it raised rents in the Davis Mountains), Fort Davis and the NPS had to adhere to new rules and regulations about energy


47Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director (Attn: Regional Chief, Property and Procurement), June 21, 1971, FODA Reading Files.
consumption, whether for heating and cooling, automobile transportation, or lighting. Among the procedures established by Superintendent Hambly in the fall of 1973 were promises to limit driving to 50 miles per hour (a burden in the wide-open spaces of the West); reduction of office hours (the new schedule would be 8:00AM-4:30PM); setting the temperature of park buildings at 68 degrees during daylight hours in the winter, and 60 degrees at night; using the photocopying machine only between the hours of 9:00-9:30AM, and 4:00-4:30PM; and a request to staff that they share rides to nearby towns like Alpine and Marfa to reduce personal energy consumption. Superintendent Hambly also offered a warning to his staff if they did not adhere to these new regulations: "I will also consider the lack of compliance with this memorandum, on the part of any employee, when position reviews come across my desk during your annual rating period." Hambly considered this "not a threat but simply the fact that compliance during this crisis is as much a part of your job as any other assigned duty."\(^{48}\)

As the energy "crisis" deepened in the winter of 1973-1974, the NPS conducted surveys of its parks to determine further measures to reduce consumption of fossil fuels and electricity. Associate regional director Monte Fitch asked Fort Davis about the impact of higher gasoline prices and the notorious closing of gasoline stations on Sundays on park visitation. Superintendent Hambly reported that Fort Davis had witnessed striking declines in attendance, beginning in October 1973 and continuing all winter. Total visitation for the calendar year 1973 fell some 27 percent, with the months of October (44 percent) and December (48 percent) leading the way. One reason for this condition was the fact that Fort Davis' off-season patronage came primarily from families in the region who traveled on weekends. With gasoline supplies uncertain, and prices high, people would stay home rather than attempt the 400-mile roundtrip from El Paso, or the 350-mile loop from Midland-Odessa. "The fuel shortage," wrote Hambly in February 1974 to the regional office, "has apparently had a very negative effect on the local merchants." So rapid had been the reduction in their businesses that "they have started advertising in area papers to the point that gas is available on Sundays in Fort Davis." Unfortunately, this had little effect on weekend travel, and Hambly suggested to his superiors that his park could be closed on Sundays without much problem. "I doubt that our closing would affect the crisis one way or another," said the superintendent, but "if local business and our public image with that business is the primary concern, we should remain open since we are one of the prime attractions in the area along with the McDonald Observatory and the seventy-six mile scenic loop drive." Hambly thought it counterproductive for his park to close if the Davis Mountains State Park remained open, as its campgrounds "makes this a twenty-four hour area if the two units were considered as a single entity."\(^{49}\)


\(^{49}\)Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, February 5, 1974, FODA Reading Files.
The staff at Fort Davis worked with their superintendent that winter to devise some imaginative solutions to the shortfall of funds, visitors, and energy supplies. On February 15, 1974, Hambly sent to the Southwest Region the park's recommendations for energy conservation. The staff saw visitation as "the first order of business," and prepared a survey of "visitor trends for the past five years—origination of visitors, percentages, of local population, etc.," to ascertain "how many there will be as compared to previous years." The NPS had also asked parks to identify sources of public transportation in their areas, and Fort Davis reported that the recently inaugurated passenger train service called "Amtrak" would have a stop in the Marfa area, and that it would increase its schedule from weekly arrivals and departures to daily. Hambly suggested that his park work with other tourist attractions in the Davis Mountains to establish "bus tours from the train depot that would last for up to a week and would allow visitation to Fort Davis, the McDonald Observatory, Big Bend, and possibly a trip to Chihuahua, Mexico." The NPS could also work with the "Texas Trail System" to bring visitors to the western part of the state. Then the staff examined issues that could be addressed internally, like "a reduced entry fee for anyone entering the various Parks by any way other than the family car;" opening the park later, because "many areas experience little visitation right after opening each day;" "the use of solar energy to run this area since the sun shines about 95 percent of the time;" and the issuance of "short-term livestock grazing permits" to "keep grasses and weeds mowed rather than use mowers like we do now." Hambly realized that this last concept invited many new problems ("over-grazing, disease, lack of fencing controls in visitor use areas"), but he hoped that the regional office might have "other areas that this suggestion would better apply to."30

One unintended consequence of the policies of energy reduction and limited budget was the need by 1975 to eliminate historical activities and maintenance scheduling. Superintendent Hambly had to cancel plans for hiring six seasonal interpreters for the summer of 1976 in order to pay for basic upkeep of the post. This in turn required Fort Davis to eliminate several historic programs that the staff had developed as part of its "living history" agenda. Among these were the "twice per week drill demonstration of 1880’s military," the "Apache Indian camp," the "Cavalry Soldier’s Camp," the "post hospital talk," the "adobe manufacture demonstration," and the "post garden activities." When added to the decision to reduce operations per day by 3.5 hours, and not using one employee at the visitors center desk during the week, Fort Davis would save enough money to provide for mowing, custodial work, and painting of the porches and trim of the historic buildings.31

These activities were the heart and soul of efforts in the 1970s to maximize the potential of the historic building rehabilitation from the previous decade, as well as the continuation of research into the details of nineteenth-century daily life at the post. The 15 years prior to 1980 witnessed several initiatives that linked structural preservation

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30 Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, February 15, 1974, FODA Reading Files.

31 Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, December 4, 1975, FODA Reading Files.
Chapter Five

with historical study of the old frontier fort, and then the attempt to dramatize that for
visitors in a concept called "living history." Yet the persistent forces of park service
regulation, local sentiments about the life of Fort Davis, and the churning of social and
political life nationwide that affected all other aspects of park management would alter
the central feature of Fort Davis: its shift in the 1970s from a construction site to a
laboratory of the western military past.

The haste of rehabilitation work had left Frank Smith and the Fort Davis staff
with little time to devote to the search for historical accuracy and detail. Less than two
weeks after the dedication ceremonies of April 1966, Smith finally spoke out on the
philosophical differences between the NPS architects and himself. Tom Crellin, praised
by park service officials at the dedication for his use of hanging porches on the officers'
row buildings, now wanted to replace the doors and windows of all structures on the
post. Smith saw this gesture as unauthentic, as "I have taken ... the level of work done
on Officers' Row ... to be the standard we are to follow." "Roofs and porches are to
the minds of the staff here preservation, while further work would be hard for us to
consider as less than restoration." In addition, the "expensive millwork items" suggested
by Crellin "would add an estimated $9,700 or so to the cost of the contract, and this is
money we do not have." Smith argued instead for door and window replacement only
on the two-story officers' quarters under restoration, and treatment of the interior
woodwork with wood preservative "to make sure that dry rot does not get into the
woodwork." The superintendent already realized the need for cost consciousness at his
"million-dollar" park, and he preferred "closing the openings [of the ruins] with
hardware cloth rather than rebuilding," as this "keeps out the people without obscuring
their close view of the interiors, and from a distance lends the effect of suspended
deterioration which is a part of our approach."  

The regional office's response to Smith's appeal showed how the profile of Fort
Davis still mattered at high levels of the Park Service, even as the reduction of operating
costs altered the superintendent's vision of rehabilitation. By outlining the windows and
doors for woodwork, said the Southwest Region, contractors would see the full plan for
Fort Davis' work, even if current financial conditions mitigated against completion of
such detail. Smith saw the logic behind this decision, but wanted the region to realize
that "the funds for FY 1966 are not very large, and we have a number of other items
also listed for the year's project money-- things which we desperately need and will be
hard pressed to afford." The increase of costs for rehabilitation (such as the issue of
doors and windows) had created the condition that "over the past three years, our total
expenditure for Historic Reconstruction has exceeded our actual available funds by almost
$10,000." This amount would have to be recaptured out of FY 1966 monies could force
the park "to drop the progress on the refurnishing work, or to hurt our chances of
completing the interior work on the two structures in the 1967 program." Only the
"Magazine Door" should be included in the ongoing schedule of construction, said Smith,

52Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, April 14, 1966, Administrative History Files, FODA
Library.
as it had "considerable interpretive value," and would be "a negligible expense compared to the other items."  

Smith's predictions came true as the strategies for fiscal year 1967 unfolded that winter. In February of that year, the regional office sent to Smith the plans for construction in 1968 and 1969, leaving Fort Davis without funding. The superintendent had hoped to "preserve the various standing walls of the area and protect them from further loss for the next ten years or so." Smith considered this unglamorous work as "mandatory," as it "carries, we feel, a much higher priority than the refurnishing developments for completion of our interpretive layout." In order to do so with existing monies, "the proposed excavation of the First Fort area must definitely be set aside." In addition, "the complete refurnishing of the Enlisted Men's barracks must be abandoned as an early objective," a project that would not be completed for another two decades. As for the Commanding Officer's Quarters (COQ), which Nan Carson had studied two years earlier, its refurnishing "must be problematical rather than certain," and the "Quartermaster's Corral now belongs to the ages." Despite these delays, Smith and his staff needed the historic structures report underway in the San Francisco NPS office, so that Fort Davis could begin rudimentary construction with day labor, and continue to seek donations of furnishings awaiting the day when money again could be spent on the COQ. The superintendent wanted the Southwest Region to know that "this is no gripe about conditions--we have heard, finally, that there is a war on [Vietnam]." The Fort Davis staff conceded that they had been "exceptionally lucky to date, in completing the roofing projects and having a functioning Visitor Center less than four years after establishment." Aware that "many other areas, especially the new areas in the System, are in desperate straits," Smith asked if the WSC could "give us just a bit of their time we would like to close out all our construction accounts and get this work done if only to cut down everybody's paperwork on Fort Davis until 1970."  

Such low-cost documentation began to surface in May 1967, when park historian Ben Levy prepared the Fort Davis "Historical Research Management Plan." Levy considered the post significant because it was a "commemorative symbol of the advance of the frontier across the American continent." As such, its ruins and structures "are a vibrant memorial to the bravery and gallantry of fighting men--white, Negro and Indian alike -- who struggled, in the case of the soldier, to extend a way of life, or in the case of the Indian, to preserve a way of life." Calling this a "relentless and, perhaps, inevitable conflict," the NPS historian called for completion of the excavation of the pre-Civil War post, as well as structures from the more famous second fort that remained unearthed. He noted that as of 1967, the NPS had restored HB-20, an enlisted men's barracks for administrative offices, the visitor center and museum. Partial restoration had occurred for the Officers' Quarters numbered HB-1 through 14 and HB-18; and the

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53 Memorandum of Smith to Chief, D&C (Design and Construction), SSC, April 25, 1966, Administrative History Files, FODA Library.

54 Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, February 6, 1967, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 40, Folder: D5015a 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.
Hospital (HB-46) and Magazine (HB-40). Despite Superintendent Smith's warning that the Quartermaster Corral would remain unfinished, Levy saw it as critical to a wholistic representation of military life "because it is located on and bears upon the Overland Trail, the existence of which is a basic condition for the establishment of the Post." The NPS historian then analyzed existing historical literature about Fort Davis, essentially that of Robert Utley and to a lesser extent Erwin Thompson. He suggested that, in order to accelerate the pace of scholarly work, the staff should "stimulate the interest of history faculty and graduate students, at colleges such as Sul Ross, to begin studies in the unresearched elements of far West Texas." Among these topics were "structural identities and configurations for both the First and Second Fort;" a "comprehensive and cohesive study of the military district of the Pecos;" and the "details and accoutrements of routine life at the Post." Acknowledging the lack of scholarly attention to the black soldier, Levy suggested that Fort Davis could initiate "a compilation, at least, and perhaps a broad study of the Negro in the service of the U.S. Armed forces should be undertaken, since this is a subject of vital interpretive potential which cannot remain ignored for long."55

Throughout the summer and fall of 1967, Frank Smith pressed the regional office in Santa Fe to release funds for both the refurnishing projects and stabilization work rejected in the appropriations given the Fort Davis. Local construction firms had agreed to conduct as much work as Smith could guarantee, and the impending completion of architect drawings for the COQ would indicate the best strategy to follow under the circumstances. In addition, the Fort Davis Historical Society extended their offer of $4,000, which was declined by the NPS. Locals offered to donate artifacts belonging to the most famous inhabitants of the COQ, Colonel Benjamin Grierson and his family. Smith put in his bid early. He told the Southwest Region, because he had learned that "the absolute requirement established by the Director that rehabilitation funds must be expended in this fiscal year or forfeited places us on a use it or lose it basis and makes immediate accomplishment mandatory."56

As the regional office planned to send Washington-based chief curator, Harold Peterson, to Fort Davis that winter, the NPS Southwest Archeological Center (SWAC) in Globe, Arizona, agreed to conduct a survey of the park under the guidance of Roland Richert, now chief of the "ruins stabilization unit." Frank Smith, said Richert, had lost his historic architect, Tom Crellin, to the Washington office, and "has thus been left to shift for himself." Richert found upon his visit that Smith "has things humming in great fashion," especially in light of the superintendent's joint service as "Key Man for the Chamizal [park] which takes a considerable amount of time." The ruins specialist also made notice upon arrival at Fort Davis on November 15, 1967, of the work crew of six to ten men under the "very competent leadership of Mr. Pablo Bencomo." The latter had

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56Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, November 28, 1967, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 26, Folder: A8215a 1865-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.
assembled a group whose skills included "masonry, adobe work, carpentry, welding, etc." Richert also recognized the hand of Tom Crellin in training the crew, as Bencomo’s charges "picked up many of the tricks of that trade involving the preservation of the buildings at Fort Davis that simply aren’t learned in books or manuals." The SWAC official wrote that Smith himself "is obviously doing a commendable job of managing and developing Fort Davis," as his staff "was cheerfully and efficiently carrying out [their] respective task." Richert then heaped additional praise on Pablo Bencomo, saying: "I was particularly impressed with Mr. Bencomo’s ability to perform direct wall repair work." "If each archeological and historic area had a man of his experience and motivation," said Richert, "the problem of properly handling recurring maintenance stabilization would be considerably simplified." 57

Richert also remarked upon the structural changes at Fort Davis since his visit there in June 1960 with Robert Utley and others of the "area investigation" team. Fortunately for Superintendent Smith, Richert judged the site to be quite similar to that found seven years earlier, and believed that continued application of NPS standards of preservation would keep the unit intact until additional funds became available. The SWAC official also took extensive photographs of the structures under discussion, which made easier the work of regional officials seeking to determine the best means to expedite the Fort Davis rehabilitation. Smith thanked Richert for his rapid response to the park’s needs, and for his recommendations regardless of the potential for funding in the immediate future. The superintendent regretted that he would not be able to employ several of the work crew permanently, but without Richert’s candid remarks, said Smith, "we would have almost certainly lost a sizeable portion of the structure concerned." 58

Roland Richert’s praise for the ruins stabilization work at Fort Davis had its parallel in the comments of Harold Peterson on the preservation of artifacts. Frank Smith and his staff had taken the NYC program and devoted it to working with the thousands of objects found on the site and donated by locals. Peterson, speaking from his vantage point in the NPS Washington headquarters, called this a "pioneer effort to use unskilled labor" that was "highly successful, and it strongly suggests that similar programs might well be of benefit elsewhere." Peterson had been invited to Fort Davis in January 1967 by Frank Smith to train the staff "in the treatment of simple stout specimens which existed in abundance among the recovered artifacts in the Fort collections." Upon returning ten months later, the WASO chief curator "was greatly pleased both with the quantity and quality of the work that has been accomplished." By hiring youth at $2.50 per hour, the cash-conscious park service was "getting a good amount of preservation work done at a fraction of the cost that would be involved if we

57 Memorandum of Roland Richert, Chief, Ruins Stabilization Unit, NPS Southwest Archeological Center (SWAC), to Chief, SWAC, December 4, 1967, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 40, Folder: D5015a 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.

use professional preservators." "Without a program such as this," Peterson believed, "it would have been impossible to do any preservation work for Fort Davis." The concept developed by Frank Smith, whom Peterson praised for his "initiative, interest and energy," "could well be made for other Service areas with similar large collections of stout metal artifacts." Among these Peterson cited "Fort Union, Bent's Old Fort, Fort Laramie and possibly Fort Clatsop."59

The WASO curator's kind words did little to assist Frank Smith in his quest for additional funds to advance the cause of historic preservation at Fort Davis. The superintendent noted in December 1967 that he would have 61 facilities completed and ready for maintenance by July 1968, requiring a transfer of his own workforce away from artifact cleaning to matters of structural preservation. Thus in January of that year, Smith defined as the goals of the park staff preparation for building maintenance, which he said would fall "primarily on the shoulders of Maintenance Foreman Bencomo and his crew." This made more problematic the acquisition in February 1968 of several "historic vehicles," which Smith described as "for eventual use in our restored quartermaster corral and shops." The park needed information from WASO about "escort wagons of immediate post-Civil War days, through the 1880's models, and also . . . information as to the thread count of the various canvases used for ambulance covers and stretchers." Fort Davis had no money for researching these vehicles, but wanted an accurate depiction of their design and operation in time for summer display for visitors.60

Throughout the year 1968, Superintendent Smith continued to receive reports from a variety of NPS personnel regarding historic preservation and refurnishing of facilities, despite the constraints on operating capital. Charles B. Voll, assistant chief of the ruins stabilization unit, devoted the month of May to excavation of some of the First Fort Davis. Voll, chief ranger Bob Crisman, and Pablo Bencomo's maintenance crew uncovered the sutler's store, a two-room adobe house behind that structure, "the stone blacksmith shop and bakery, fragments of three of the four 1856 warehouses . . . part of the temporary first Second Fort hospital, the Second Fort Hospital Laundry, two First Fort Jacal Officers' Quarters, a stone wall and a square post hole." Ernest Allen Connally, chief of the NPS Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, read and commented upon Ben Levy's COQ furnishing study; the document that specified 1884 as the date for selection of artifacts. Levy's rationale was that "landscaping in front of the [COQ] and in front of the other officers' quarters at Fort Davis was accomplished in early October 1884." Connally noted that some within the park service had preferred

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59 Memorandum of Harold L. Peterson, NPS Chief Curator, to NPS Assistant Director for Interpretation, December 21, 1967, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 26, Folder: A8215a 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.

representing Fort Davis earlier than this, seeking to "reflect a rougher and more primitive, and perhaps unkempt, appearance to the Fort, in order to carry it back closer in point of time to the last important Indian campaign in which the garrison of Fort Davis participated." Frank Smith was one of the adherents to an earlier depiction of officers' life at the post, but historian Levy countered with the argument that "the record is too clear that the Grierson household, especially at Fort Davis, was intended as a comfortable, even luxurious, home." Levy saw the Griersons' lavishness as a good counterpoint to the life of the average officer, and encouraged Smith: "If the itinerant character of the officer and his household is a theme that needs telling, then a simply furnished officer's quarters may be the answer." Furnishings specialist Nan Carson Rickey echoed Levy's sentiments, viewing Grierson not as the dashing hero of 1880s Indian campaigns, but as "a mature man, experienced now in business as well as war," and as a senior officer entering "the time of reward for service rendered--an all-too-brief time for most [officers], when [he] could enjoy and profit from the land and the peace [he] had wrought."61

While the issue of dating the refurnishing of the COQ might seem petty compared to the struggle to create Fort Davis and rehabilitate its structures, Superintendent Smith saw the comments of Ben Levy and Nan Rickey as challenging his own vision of the history of the park. "We have assumed," Smith told the SWR director, "that the object [of refurnishing] was to show the area as close to the time of maximum historic significance as possible." This meant "the use of Grierson as the occupant of the CO's Quarters on the basis of his overall prominence and the fact that he was commander of the [Pecos] District during the years of the greatest activity." Smith and his staff had identified this period as the late 1870s and early 1880s, just before completion of the Grierson expansion of facilities at Fort Davis; an expansion, incidentally, that could proceed because of the commander's clout within the service, and the general lack of Indian resistance that would not delay construction. The Fort Davis staff also took exception to Nan Rickey's suggestion that Grierson was "an 'aging hero.'" Smith characterized the commander as in the prime of life, both professionally and personally. "We find no evidence," said the superintendent, "that [Grierson] was resigning himself to the command of a 'so-so' post at this time." Smith stood firm for 1883 as the date for calculating the COQ refurnishing project, and advised the SWR director: "Let other areas tell the story of the economic effects of retiring army officers--Fort Davis was established and maintained as a fighting post, and other approaches do not meet the

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61Memorandum of Charles B. Voll, Assistant Chief, NPS Ruins Stabilization Unit, to Chief, Ruins Stabilization Unit, May 29, 1968, Administrative History Files, FODA Library; Memorandum of Ernest Allen Connally, Chief, NPS Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, to SWR Director, June 5, 1968; Memorandum of Benjamin Levy, May 20, 1968; Memorandum of Nan Rickey, May 20, 1968, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1968-1970, Box 128, Folder: D6215a 1968-1970 FODA, Denver NARA. Nan Rickey was the former Nan Carson, having married Don Rickey of the Midwest Regional Office of the park service.
requirements of the Interpretive Prospectus nor the approach we have been emphasizing, and shall continue to use."

Little did Superintendent Smith and the Fort Davis staff realize that it would not be until 1981 that the Grierson home would be completed and opened to the visiting public. Where generous funding of the structural rehabilitation of the post from 1961-1966 had resulted in rapid progress, the dearth of capital funds thereafter at Fort Davis caused Smith, his successor Derek Hambly, and the employees of the historic site to engage in a circuitous journey to fill the rooms of the COQ and bring the commander’s world to life. This process began in 1968, when Nan Rickey traveled to Los Angeles to meet with the two surviving Grierson granddaughters, Alice and Joy. Rickey spent two days with the elderly sisters, neither of whom had been born or raised at Fort Davis (Alice was born in 1892 at Fort Custer, Joy in 1894 at Fort Keogh). They discussed family history, and perused "a sizable collection of manuscripts and photographs for research use and ultimate deposit at Fort Davis." The lack of Grierson personal property, however, was not the fault of the granddaughters, and in studying its whereabouts, said Rickey, was "increasingly complex, difficult to understand, and (in some instances) unsavory." The vast majority of the commander’s possessions, Rickey surmised, "must be assumed to be dispersed in the vicinity of Fort Davis." Alice and Joy Grierson had in their possession "only two classes of objects that once belonged to their grandfather: oriental rugs and books." The women also had a substantial collection of family heirlooms gathered from the East and West Coasts throughout the nineteenth century. As the Grierson granddaughters had no heirs, Rickey "suggested that some of this material might find good and appropriate use at Fort Davis, even though it does not have Grierson provenance."

As the Fort Davis staff prepared to receive the donations of the Grierson family, they also discovered that they might benefit from a raid by the Internal Revenue Service in El Paso on the Munoz-Sun Hardware store. The courts had ruled that this company would have to forfeit its inventory to the IRS for failure to pay back taxes. Among the items seized by the agents were antique weapons that Frank Smith believed could augment the Fort Davis collections. In discussions with the IRS officials, Smith learned that the agency "had begun to worry about the public relations and unfavorable publicity which would attend a major arms auction, even of historic guns, so soon after passage of a series of firearms control bills." This last reference was to the spate of violent incidents occurring elsewhere across America in the spring and summer of 1968, in which the famed civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in April in Memphis, Tennessee, followed in June by U.S. Senator Robert Kennedy in Los

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63 Memorandum of Nan V. Rickey to SWR Director, August 20, 1969; Memorandum of Rickey to Chief, NPS Division of Planning and Interpretive Services, January 2, 1969, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1968-1970, Box 128, Folder: D6215a 1968-1970 FODA, Denver NARA; Nicholas J. Bleser, FODA Historian, to Casey E. Barthelness, Miles City, MT, December 1, 1971, FODA Reading Files.
Angeles while campaigning for president. As Congress had moved quickly to establish controls on weapons sales and distribution, the IRS decided that "such pieces [as the Munoz collection] as may be desirable for use by government agencies for museum use may be transferred to these agencies." Smith agreed to the appraisal value set by the IRS, and prepared a list of appropriate weapons that he believed the Southwest Region should purchase for the sum of $2,000. This culminated two years of negotiations between Smith and the El Paso IRS office, and the Fort Davis superintendent urged his superiors: "In this case, and in view of the quality of some of the items, and the difficulty of acquiring them at a precise moment, it would be cheaper in both manpower and money to proceed."64

Smith’s request appealed to the NPS at a time when money was in short supply for such activities as artifact acquisition. Frank Kowski, Southwest Regional Director, asked the Park Service’s Washington office of interpretation for their approval, as "we gather that IRS is a little spooky of a public gun sale at this particular time in view of the [Johnson] Administration’s interest in side arms legislation." Kowski also cited Frank Smith’s research into the broader applicability of the Munoz collection, stating: "Many of these items would be wonderfully suitable for displays at Fort Laramie, Fort Union, Fort Davis, or Civil War areas and possibly the Defense Department project of the Army-Navy Museum." Smith had also learned that the preliminary value of the entire collection, which included period swords, was some $66,000, validating Kowski’s contention that "in these austere days we can’t let an opportunity like this go by without making some effort at fulfilling our needs."65

Negotiations with the IRS culminated in the spring of 1970 with sale of the "Sun Hardware collection" to the NPS, with final appraisal set at $37,223. In order to protect the collection, Frank Smith had arranged to display only one item, "a $3,500 third model Colt’s Dragoon pistol." The other weapons of high value would be "placed temporarily in a bank vault at the First National Bank of Alpine," as they offered "twenty-four hour security," while the remainder would be housed at the park, which Smith described as "in spite of occasional false alarms, . . . secure from all but the most professional and sophisticated intruders." Smith then had to plan for the weapons' cleaning and cataloguing. Realizing that his staff needed additional training in weapons curation, the superintendent arranged for a return visit to Fort Davis by NPS chief curator Harold Peterson and regional curator Jean Swearingen to teach the staff how to organize the Sun Hardware collection. Smith also offered advice to the Southwest Region on controversial issues connected to the publicity of this purchase. "In view of the delicacy of the public relations in this area," the IRS had asked "that they be given time to clear [the press release] with their Austin Regional Office." Another unforeseen obstacle, said Smith, was


65Memorandum of Kowski to NPS Director (Attn: Assistant Director, Interpretation), July 8, 1968; Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, November 21, 1969, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1968-1970, Box 128, Folder: D6215a 1968-1970 FODA, Denver NARA.
that "since local gun collectors may well be up in arms about the removal of this collection from commercial channels, we will face a problem, which would not be as fiery in Santa Fe as in the local and more personal contacts." Finally, Smith warned that for security reasons the NPS press release should not identify Fort Davis as the site for curation and processing of the weapons. He did want his superiors to recognize the teamwork undertaken since 1965 to bring the historic weapons collection into the park service, and invited the regional director to Fort Davis to "get a look at it before it is transferred to the various receiving areas." 

Money for guns at Fort Davis was easier to obtain than artifacts for the commanding officer's quarters. This was primarily because nothing had been done on the plans to restore and refurnish the building. In the late 1960s, the Fort Davis Historical Society purchased a Victorian set of bedroom furniture and a number of chairs for the quarters. This was done at the recommendation of Nan Carson Rickey, who had been designated to write the furnishing plan for the building. As no work was being done on the quarters, however, the furniture was placed in storage (in HB-3) at the fort. In fact, Mrs. Carson visited Fort Davis and accompanied by society members, including Mrs. Lucy Miller, went to the homes of a number of citizens who had pieces of furnishings appropriate for the refurnishing project.

In the early 1970s, some society members expressed concern as to whether or not the purchased furniture would ever be "used" or displayed. In the meantime, the fort had offers of donations for the quarters. One piece was a large walnut wardrobe owned by Mrs. Lucy Miller of Fort Davis and her son Clay Miller of Valentine. The piece had belonged to Colonel Grierson and his family and the Millers wanted it returned to "where it belonged." They were, however, reluctant to donate if they could not be assured that it would be displayed.

In the fall of 1971, park historian Nick Bleser, realizing that donations might be lost if the only thing the Park Service at Fort Davis could guarantee was storage space for items, suggested that the hallway and the north room of HB-2 could be "restored" and open to the public. Nothing was really done in the way of restoration except that the rooms were painted and the flooring stained. In June of 1972, half of the hallway and bedroom of HB-2 were open to the public. Volunteers and staff, dressed in some "not too authentic" 1880s dresses, maintained and interpreted the quarters. On display in the bedroom were the Grierson wardrobe donated by the Millers, the purchased set of bedroom furniture consisting of the bed, washstand, and dresser with mirror, and some of the purchased chairs. Many of the volunteers that summer were historical society members. Park historian Nick Bleser saved the day, said Hambly, when he "suggested an interim restoration of the hall and bedroom of another building." The superintendent reported to the Southwest Region that its decision to include the COQ in the restoration budget for the next two years would insure more such donations. Hambly then added: "The completion of the furnishing plan will give us a base to work from in obtaining many materials that are still in local hands." This in turn would lead to "actual

restoration work [which] will see the culmination of what many local residents take [as] their historic heritage and serve as an added incentive for local participation in historical interpretation in cooperation with the Service.\(^{67}\)

For the remainder of the 1970s, the Fort Davis staff and management sought funding of the COQ, and at times the regional office indicated a willingness to expedite this request. In May 1977, Douglas Ashley and Harold LaFleur, both historic architects from WASO, came to west Texas to examine the structure prior to writing "an Architectural Data Section of an Historic Structure Report." Ashley and LaFleur both echoed the thoughts of NPS staff dating from the park’s inception, calling the COQ a building "of the first order of significance." They highlighted the consequence of delays in completing the work, as some 16 years after opening "the structure is barricaded to limit public entry due to unsafe conditions caused by some loose masonry, lack of flooring, and loose plasterwork." In 1964 the COQ had received, along with the other buildings along Officers' Row, its own porch and roof to prevent major deterioration. The window and door frames had remained intact, but the architects wrote that "all of the original flooring and floor structure is missing." Only the stone foundation remained of the detached adobe building that housed the commander’s kitchen and servants' quarters. Ashley and LaFleur thus recommended that the NPS "examine the feasibility of a full restoration of the house proper, and a reconstruction of the various 'out' buildings." It was their hope that such a study could be completed by February 1978, with plans for actual construction to commence soon thereafter.\(^{68}\)

The only substantial challenge to the plans outlined by the NPS historic architects came from F. Ross Holland, Jr., chief of the park service’s cultural resources management division in Washington. In March 1978, Holland reviewed the work of Ashley and LaFleur, crediting them with thoroughness, but criticizing their recommendations for full restoration. Holland believed that the planned "restoration/reconstruction/refurnishing would detract from the overall ambience of Fort Davis today and that it would tend to distract the visitor from an appreciation of the fort’s primary historical significance." The WASO chief liked how previous structural work at Fort Davis evoked "the passage of time and its effects," giving the historic site "a high degree of integrity as an ensemble having shared a common past down to the present." Holland argued that complete restoration work on the COQ "would constitute a jarring modern intervention and create a visual anachronism." He also was not convinced that the plan "would produce an interpretive gain in terms of greater visitor understanding of the significance of Fort Davis." More specifically, Holland noted that the design to rebuild the adobe servants’ quarters "would cut across the foundation of the first fort." Unless the park service would restore all the outbuildings at the rear of

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\(^{67}\)Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, October 11, 1972, FODA Reading Files; Mary Williams to author, April 30, 1996.

\(^{68}\)Memorandum of Douglas S. Ashley and Harold LaFleur, Historical Architects, NPS Historic Preservation Division, Denver Service Center (DSC), to Assistant Manager, Southeast/Southwest Team, DSC, June 16, 1977, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Fort Worth FRC.
Chapter Five

Officers' Row, the COQ work would "be creating a visual impression that never existed as part of the historic scene." Instead the cultural resources chief voted for "Alternative C," in which the NPS provided merely "basic exterior restoration and interior preservation." This he concluded "would best foster public appreciation of the outstanding total resource that is Fort Davis today."^69

Holland's caution about the architectural integrity of the COQ plan prompted the NPS to send additional experts to the west Texas site for additional opinions. In July 1978, the Harpers Ferry Center of the park service sent to Fort Davis David Wallace, whose task was to review the plans for refurnishing of buildings. Wallace noted "the care with which the Site staff have adapted the furnishings for the Commanding Officer's quarters to the somewhat smaller officer's quarters they presently occupy pending restoration of the CO's Quarters." Despite these limitations, Wallace found the work "one of the best documented officer's quarters projects I know of, thanks to the Grierson family's saving habits." The Harpers Ferry official hoped that "the building restoration can be undertaken soon, so that the project can be stepped-up and other extant Grierson furnishing acquired while still available." He further noted that the furnishing plan was "several years old," and that "the Kitchen of the CO's Quarters is not to be reconstructed." Wallace urged the staff to write similar reports for two additional historic structures: the commissary storehouse (1885-1891), and the enlisted men's barracks. He believed that these and other research tasks could be readily accomplished, as "Fort Davis has been blessed with imaginative, innovative, 'can-do' superintendents and staff who have done wonders with relatively little outside help." Wallace promised to expedite the furnishing program, but the staff could be excused for not embracing his words with the enthusiasm that first greeted Robert Utley, et al., when they walked the grounds of Fort Davis two decades earlier in search of an authentic western military experience.^70

That dedication shown to David Wallace by the Fort Davis staff was most apparent to visitors in the interpretive programs developed under historians Nicholas Bleser, Mary Williams and Doug McChristian. From 1966-1980, this group and other NPS employees, in the words of Frank Smith, "never let the visitor know" about limitations on funding, or the vagaries of park service policy, that would constrain the program of historical representation at Fort Davis. This would eventually lead NPS officials to recognize the distinctiveness of the park's "living history" efforts, which along with the highly praised museum and visitor center, the scholarly work of staff members, and the outreach programs and volunteer organization of the staff, made the west Texas military post define itself as a hallmark of federal service to the American public.

^69Memorandum of F. Ross Holland, Jr., Chief, NPS Cultural Resources Management Division, to SWR Director, March 28, 1978, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Fort Worth FRC.

^70Memorandum of Ellsworth R. Swift, Deputy Manager, NPS Harpers Ferry Center (HFC), WV, to SWR Director, August 11, 1978, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Fort Worth FRC.
Visitor service, including positive publicity, was easier to accomplish in the years after the gala dedication ceremonies than full rehabilitation of the park’s historic structures. Frank Smith tried within weeks of the April 1966 event to capitalize on the media coverage of Lady Bird Johnson and the other dignitaries who came to Fort Davis. The superintendent thus wrote to Frank Hildebrand, executive director of the Texas Tourist Development Agency, to thank him for "the magnificent publicity given Fort Davis in the Texas Parade and the national coverage in the Readers’ Digest." Smith then sought more recognition from the Texas state agency for the upcoming 50th anniversary of the creation of the park service. "Do you think that the excitement generated by the Guadalupe [Mountain National Park] proposals, Mrs. Johnson’s trip, and the developments taking place at Padre Island, Sanford [Reservoir], and potential consideration of Big Thicket and other areas," said Smith, "would make the state government interested in such a designation?" If Texas would link its tourism promotion to the NPS’s golden anniversary, "this could be used as a future publicity tie throughout the state or simply as a reminder to Texans that they don’t need to spend the summer in Arizona or Colorado to develop a great vacation."71

Symptomatic of the challenges facing the Park Service in its efforts to publicize Fort Davis was the embarrassment registered by Frank Smith just weeks after his correspondence with Texas Tourism’s Frank Hildebrand. Within days of opening the new museum’s displays about black soldiers in the West, the Fort Davis staff began hearing comments from patrons about the remarkable likeness of one mannequin to the prominent black actor and comedian, Sammy Davis, Jr. While only a handful of adults remarked on the features of the black statue, "the recognition among school groups," Smith reported to the Southwest Region, "was 100%." School children, instead of being impressed with the grandeur and sweep of the Fort Davis story, and of the role of black soldiers therein, found the display amusing if not hilarious. "Grierson’s heroic stand [at Quitman Canyon]," the superintendent bemoaned, "was completely forgotten" by the youth. Smith surmised that the NPS exhibit designers had sculpted one of the figures "to closely resemble the popular motion picture and television star." While the superintendent did not wish to criticize the Park Service professionals in the San Francisco museum laboratory, nonetheless he needed someone to come to Fort Davis immediately and "minimize the resemblance and correct this situation."72

The issue of race at Fort Davis also surfaced in the summer of 1966 in the form of Hollywood feature filming. Duane Graf, Frank Smith’s counterpart at Tuzigoot National Monument in Arizona, mailed the Fort Davis superintendent a news clipping

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72Memorandum of Smith to NPS Director (Attn: Chief, Branch of Museum Operations), June 6, 1966; Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director (Attn: Regional Chief, I&VS [Interpretation and Visitor Services]), July 6, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 26, Folder: A9027a 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.
from the *Arizona Republic* that identified a California film company as interested in making a picture entitled, "The Saga of the Tenth Cavalry." Smith sent a letter to his brother-in-law, Chan Thomas of Los Angeles, California, asking him to inquire about the willingness of the company to come to west Texas for authentic sites and historical accuracy. "The idea of a film on the Tenth Cavalry is extremely exciting to us," Smith told Thomas in June 1966, "because if the Tenth had a 'home post' during the Indian War period, it would have to be either Fort Sill [Oklahoma] or Fort Davis." The superintendent enclosed "a few quick polaroids [instant snapshot pictures]" of pertinent museum displays, and outlined the significant features of the historic site. He also noted with pride that the film star Elizabeth Taylor had recently visited nearby Marfa for production of the movie "Giant." Smith then offered to have his staff conduct the film producers, one of whom was the black actor and former professional football player, Woody Strode, around the Davis Mountains in search of suitable locations.  

Beyond the obvious attention that a Hollywood film would bring to Fort Davis, Superintendent Smith also campaigned with his brother-in-law to highlight the mistakes made by the film industry in depicting the West. "If for once a motion picture can be produced which shows a western fort without a palisade or wall around it," said the superintendent, "and have the troops in something which resembles the uniforms of the United States Army, all we history buffs would get just a bit excited." Because Hollywood offered inaccurate portrayals of military garb, visitors had difficulty accepting Fort Davis' interpretation of Army life. "Even though we have one of our rangers dressed in the outfit part of the time," Smith told Thomas, "people still can't believe that the outfit is for real." The superintendent hoped that Messrs. Strode et al., were "as sincere as they sound in their efforts for accuracy," as the "story of the Buffalo Soldiers is one that needs telling, and it's a real epic." Smith then targeted the harm that Hollywood had wrought on the viewing public by being its major source of information on the western military past. "Most historians," he concluded in his pitch to Woody Strode via Chan Thomas, "are thoroughly disgusted with the seventy year emphasis on the Seventh Cavalry as a typical Indian War outfit." The glamour associated with the doomed command of Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn (June 1876) distorted the image received by audiences, and Smith wanted "to see a bit of attention given to the regiments that won fights instead of being half wiped out!"  

Woody Strode's film company decided to remain in the Los Angeles area that summer to complete their work on "The Saga of the 10th Cavalry;" a film that never appeared in movie houses. Nonetheless, the idea of movie production at Fort Davis appealed to Frank Smith, who asked the regional office for advice on supervision of film companies in the future. In August 1966, Smith received a memorandum from the

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73 Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, June 28, 1966; Smith to Chan P. Thomas, Los Angeles, CA, June 28, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 27, Folder: A9027a 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.

74 Smith to Thomas, June 28, 1966.
Washington NPS office reiterating the policy in use at places like the Grand Canyon and Virgin Islands National Park, the most recent park service venues for film and television location shooting. The NPS was most concerned about "possible damage to park features and structures, the safety of visitors, and provisions for assuring that possible damage will be repaired and features restored at the expense of the producing company." Harthon L. Bill, NPS acting assistant director for operations, told Smith that he should prepare any permit for film production with an eye toward the "special features and values" of Fort Davis, along with "the kind of volume of visitor traffic, location of the main public use areas, whether sets are to be constructed, as well as the kind of footage the producing company wants." The park service would also agree to waive mention of itself in the credits of the film at "the discretion of the Superintendent, but the credit line is desirable if the production is a good one."\footnote{Memorandum of Harthon L. Bill, NPS Acting Assistant Director, Operations, to FODA Superintendent, August 1, 1966, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1965-1967, Box 27, Folder: A9027a 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.}

Failure to secure the Strode production did not deter Frank Smith in his quest for publicity through Hollywood. In August 1968, Fort Davis hosted the famed western historian Dr. William Leckie, best known at that time for his book *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West* (1967). Then the vice president for academic affairs at the University of Toledo, Leckie had been interested in the black soldier since his days in the Army Air Corps, when he commanded a unit of 200 black airmen returning to the States at the close of World War II. "We have been assisting [Leckie] in his research work," Smith wrote to the regional director, "and he will be using a number of pictures, credited to the Service, in his new edition of the book next spring." More exciting for Smith and the staff was Leckie's sale of "the screen rights to 'Buffalo Soldiers' to MCA-Universal, one of the better financed Hollywood groups." This international entertainment conglomerate had employed as producer Tom Laughlin, later to become famous as the director-star of the *Billy Jack* film series of the early 1970s. Laughlin's story would focus not only upon the "combat work of the Tenth Cavalry," but also on the "court martial of Lieutenant Henry Flipper, first negro graduate of West Point, which took place while Flipper was assigned at Davis with the Tenth." Smith described Leckie "as anti-Hollywood as anyone I know," but the Laughlin production had convinced him that "this will be a quality film, with the greatest drive towards authentic portrayal of any picture to date." The production staff mentioned as stars "Sidney Poitier to play Flipper, Burt Lancaster to play Grierson, and Paul Newman to portray Captain Louis Carpenter, whose prominence as an Indian fighter has been pretty well ignored by history." All three actors had won or would win Academy Awards for their work, which led the superintendent to proclaim: "While these people [the production staff] may be talking through their hats, and hoping instead of having
commitments, the rumored high price of the screen rights indicates a serious investment and an urge to do an expensive and presumably quality job."  

Fort Davis and its legendary black troopers never received the glamorous treatment that Frank Smith envisioned in the late 1960s. The park instead settled for a worthwhile four-part Public Broadcasting System (PBS) series made in 1968 for $200,000 by the Nebraska Educational Television Network, entitled "The Black Frontier." The prospectus written by the NETN stated that it would highlight the "little-known and undocumented area of American history" occupied by the "Negro on the Great Plains." Not knowing of the historical work done at Fort Davis by the NPS, John Flower, special projects coordinator for NETN wrote to the Fort Davis Historical Society seeking all manner of research documents and materials pertinent to the black soldiers’ story. The society wisely handed Flower’s letter to Frank Smith, who informed NETN that "we have little on the Negro frontiersman and settler, but a great deal on the Negro soldier." While the park library held but a dozen books on the black units, Smith and his staff had augmented these with "quite a few of the lesser known biographies and personal reminiscences of various officers." Smith also suggested to the Nebraska station that the microfilmed papers of Colonel Grierson would be helpful, as would the Leckie study of the black soldier. As an added attraction for NETN, the superintendent recommended the "'Brevet' Tenth Cavalry, a group in Los Angeles who have appeared on television on several recent occasions." NETN took Smith up on his offer of research and location assistance, and the success of "The Black Frontier" in 1970 led PBS to fund a three-part series on the life of Lieutenant Flipper.  

Public Broadcasting may have given Fort Davis its most accurate representation of the black soldier’s story for general audiences, but its reach in the early 1970s was quite modest in comparison to that of Hollywood. Unfortunately, Frank Smith and the park staff faced a far more difficult task in working with the producers of a commercial film on the Tenth Cavalry. The saga began in September 1969, when Harry Weed of Santa Monica, California, wrote to Smith seeking a permit to film at Fort Davis. Weed claimed to be developing a "documentary" about the black horse soldiers. Smith at first believed that Weed intended to produce a show not unlike NETN's "The Black Frontier," and he accordingly obliged the Californian with advice on locations, story lines, and research documentation. Thus it came as somewhat of a surprise to Smith that Weed represented an organization named "Dakota Productions, Inc.," which the superintendent described to the Southwest Regional Director as "simply not professional." Smith asked

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NETN for their opinion of Dakota's work, and the latter company shared space at Fort Davis in February 1970 to prepare its "documentary." "Realistically," the superintendent informed the regional director, "the staff here, and the historians connected with the University [of Nebraska] project agree that there is little chance of the Dakota Production being accepted by any theater chain, or being shown in any wide areas." The park service, said Smith, should take care to gain "control on use of stock footage... which will be the only salable material Dakota Productions will have."78

Smith did not realize that Dakota Productions understood better how to market western history on the silver screen. Dakota was replaced in May 1970 by "HJS Productions," whose "production and location staff" Smith described as "largely different" than Dakota, as they "seem to be highly cooperative." "Regrettably," Smith had to report, "the script is virtually unchanged, and presents a picture of the frontier military which is largely erroneous." This paled in comparison to Smith's discovery that "the inclusion of a number of scenes (not to be filmed at Fort Davis) which involve nudity and sexual intercourse, would be guaranteed to bring down the wrath of the more prudish of the Congressional critics on us." In addition, "the use of several scenes of somewhat gratuitous violence will be guaranteed to bring down criticism from the other end of the spectrum." For these reasons, the superintendent saw "no possibility of permitting use of the Service acknowledgement or area acknowledgement in the film." Smith also learned a lesson from the disastrous experience of park staff at nearly Carlsbad Caverns. "We have attached a rider concerning any 'stock footage' which might be developed from the film taken here," said the superintendent, "to be sure that a repeat of the use of Carlsbad Caverns footage for a number of subnormal horror films will not occur." All Smith could hope for was that "the apparent success of the [PBS] documentary filmed earlier may more than make up for this distressing production." Especially distressing to a history buff like Smith was the "continuing undercurrent of disgust with regard to the script on the part of many of the actors, black and white." The film script had been written by the wife of the director, Stan Thorne, whom Smith recalled twenty-four years later as having no knowledge of history, but possessed of a "bleeding heart" for what she perceived was the victimization of the Indians and the sexual prowess of black men. The film had to be released four times under different titles to try to recapture the original investment: "Men of the Tenth," "Red, White, and Black," "Fort Davis Bugle," and lastly "Soul Soldier." Whatever its incarnation, park historian Nick Bleser wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Michl of Decatur, Illinois: "As a history of the 10th Cavalry it is a complete abomination and we cringe every time Fort

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Davis is mentioned in connection with it, for it seems to be merely an attempt to cash in on the current trends with a cheap, sexy, black Western."

Blame for public confusion about the story of the westward movement in general, and Fort Davis in particular, could not be laid at the feet of the park staff, who devoted much of their time in the late 1960s and 1970s to efforts at educating visitors and local residents alike. This quest for new knowledge took two forms: public school programs on issues of the moment like environmental protection; and the "living history" agenda that swept the NPS in these years as a means of bringing the past to life for those visitors whose tastes ran to the conventional, or whose time was of the essence. In each case, the work of the Fort Davis employees helped those who sought new information and perspectives on the history of far west Texas, both ecological and cultural, and prepared the park for its next round of historic structure development in the decade of the 1980s.

Fort Davis' support of NPS initiatives on environmental education benefitted, as did its work on issues of race and ethnicity, from the work of Superintendent Frank Smith. In 1968, prior to the major national impetus for ecological sensitivity, Smith used his relationship with the Mountain-Plains Museums Association (MPMA) to make presentations to his colleagues on the Park Service's "Environmental Study Area" (ESA) program. This concept had students of communities surrounding national parks use the facilities as living laboratories, taking field trips to the NPS units that welcomed youthful curiosity about the workings of nature. The success of one such appearance by Smith at the September 1968 MPMA meeting in Boulder, Colorado, led friends of the Fort Davis superintendent to suggest that he write articles on the ESA program for the Museum News, the newsletter of the American Association of Museums (AAM). Smith also sought to expose the general public to environmental issues via television, considering a weekly series on an Odessa station, and use of such programs at college campuses like Sul Ross. Then in 1969, Fort Davis agreed to a full ESA component on site, with a section of the park library dedicated to environmental study materials, training given to all employees to make them more aware of the place of ecology in their lives, inclusion of these themes in the nightly campfire talks given at the nearby Davis Mountains State Parks, and development of a section of the "First Fort Canyon" and the North Ridge Nature Trail for student field observations. Fort Davis began this latter program with the fifth grade class of the neighboring Anderson elementary school, with hopes of expanding the concept to other levels in the future.

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80 Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, July 8, 1968; Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director (Attn: Regional Coordinator, Environmental Awareness Program), October 7, 1968; Memorandum of Robert J. Holden, Acting FODA Superintendent, to SWR Director (Attn: Special Assistant to the Regional Director for Environmental Awareness), March 27, 1969; Memorandum of Kowski to FODA Superintendent, May 21, 1969, NPS FODA General File; Memorandum of William E. Brown, Special Assistant to the Regional Director for Environmental Awareness, to the Special Assistant to the NPS
Environmentalism proved to be more than a passing fad of the radical 1960s and 1970s, and the same could be said for Fort Davis' embrace of the living history concept that arose at the same time. Doug McChristian came to Fort Davis in 1972 as part of his goal of working at each of the NPS' Indian wars parks, and as part of his determination to incorporate the benefits of reenacting history for visitors. He recalled in a 1994 interview that the Park Service by the early 1970s had become "hooked" on physical demonstrations of the life of the people who inhabited an historic site. He found at Fort Davis a park where "the principal justification . . . was its structural preservation." What better place to make history come alive than a setting where the Park Service had rendered the inert structures alive, thought McChristian, who had a bachelor's degree in history from Fort Hays State College and experience in the living history program at Fort Larned in his home state of Kansas. The only drawback, he remembered, was that Fort Davis had little enthusiasm for "telling the larger story" of the frontier West, nor were local residents eager to address the place of the black soldier on the parade grounds and in the barracks.\(^1\)

Between its dedication and the close of the 1970s, the Fort Davis Story had come into view. Plans for building restoration had given way to historical and cultural research on furnishings and interpretive services. All that remained would be for the staff and management to implement an idea that had achieved prominence in the "public history", field in the 1970s: the concept of "living history." Resulting from the previous decades fascination with the stories of average people and their everyday lives, the Fort Davis living history initiative would complete the first generation of planning and development at the premier historical attraction of far west Texas.

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\(^1\)Memorandum of Smith to NPS Director (Attn: Assistant Director, Interpretation), October 23, 1967, RG79, NPS, SWRO,GA Files 1965-1967, Box 55, Folder: K1815 1965-1967 FODA, Denver NARA.
CHAPTER SIX

Fort Davis and The Living History Initiative, 1966-1980

As with environmental and museum programs, Fort Davis' living history venture began with the tenure of Frank Smith, whose role in museum development and the music of the retreat parade fit well with the later impetus for full-dress reenactments. The 1966 dedication ceremonies had included the appearance of James Cage, an El Paso schoolteacher dressed in military uniform and talking with visitors to explain his outfit. In October 1967, Smith suggested to the Southwest Region that policies had to change about engaging the visitor more closely than before. "With modern attitudes," said the superintendent, "of maintaining a distance between them [the visitor] and the cashier who is the first uniformed employee they meet, we have to go to special lengths to get away from the barriers which so many travelers erect around themselves." Smith discovered that the large crowds that descended upon Fort Davis in the summertime made personal contact by rangers difficult if not impossible. His solution was "period dress," which he found to be "an automatic ice-breaker." "Apart from the air of authenticity which the period dress brings to the area," the superintendent noted, "this opening for contact is alone worth the extra expenditures and the effort in acquiring the appropriate items."1

Another foray into recreation of the historic past that Fort Davis addressed was the printing of a book of recipes by the wife of Colonel Grierson. The idea took shape when Mary Williams sought help from other NPS staffers throughout the system to test the ingredients for both their authenticity and edibility. The Fort Davis Historical Society had tried in the late 1960s to publish a book of western recipes, but was not able to organize the project in good time. Williams, who was among the NPS' first women rangers and first to promote the role of women in Park Service interpretation, approached SPMA in 1972 to determine the feasibility of a 72-page publication with both historic recipes and their contemporary renderings. "We really are sure the book will sell," Williams told SPMA's Earl Jackson, as "we have already had numerous inquiries from people and dealers concerning the book and when it will be available for purchase." The book would later appear in print, marking a significant contribution of Fort Davis to the story of family and community life on the far western frontier.2

These endeavors could not satisfy Frank Smith in the spring of 1971, as he sought an ambitious living history agenda at Fort Davis not unlike that undertaken a decade earlier to restore the structural identity of the frontier Army post. Times had changed,


2Memorandum of Smith to SWR Director, April 15, 1971, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1971-1973, Box 231, Folder: K1815 1971-1973 FODA, Denver NARA.
however, in Washington, with budget cutting the central feature of the administration of
President Richard M. Nixon. "The living history program at Fort Davis," Smith told the
regional director, "is stalled at this time, and further development must simply wait for
the provision of physical facilities, as per our last five-year program." Smith and his
staff promised "to continue the use of period uniforms for summer patrol and contact
work . . . hoping that on some future date we will be able to acquire the horse which
will enlarge upon this facet of the military life." In addition, Fort Davis awaited the
"embarrassingly slow effort for the refurnishing of the Commanding Officer's Quarters
(where living history will be quite elaborate)." Smith could report that his park would
contribute to the NPS' "American Folk Culture" venue that summer by joining with the
Fort Davis Historical Society to celebrate Independence Day at the park. "The utilization
of the full range of games and contests," said the superintendent, "with selected foods
to be available, and the general atmosphere of the nineteenth century celebrations should
combine to present visitors and participants with a bit of interesting nostalgia." The
staff, however, were "unanimous in their opinion that period refurnishing is a
prerequisite of successful operations in this part of the country."

To Smith's surprise, "the First Annual Grand and Glorious Fourth of July
Celebration proved to be an outstanding success." Nick Bleser, Fort Davis
ranger-historian, reported to the superintendent that the event "began as an outgrowth of
a make-shift celebration held a year ago in the town of Fort Davis, where a barbecue was
held and many of the townspeople participated in old-fashioned costume." The festivities
drew some 600 attendees, and the local sponsors asked for permission to hold the 1971
event at Fort Davis. "We have sought methods of re-awakening local interest and
participation in the fort," said Bleser, and "this was not only a good opportunity but it
also sounded like it would be a lot of fun." With the coordination of the historical
society, the park hosted food booths, "an art show, silent movies, a barbecue,
horseshoeing demonstration, games, races, mule-drawn wagon (Army escort) around the
playground for the kids, and an excellent concert by the Mount Locke singers." Of
special mention was the local response to the call for period costume, "some of which
had been worn by mothers or grandfathers in the 19th Century." Bleser joined the staff
in old-fashioned outfits, and "the N.Y.C. boys were dressed as pretty passable Apaches,"
who engaged "a couple of passing soldiers" in sniper fire from the rocks surrounding the
fort. The park hosted upwards of 2,000 visitors on that day, and "the main lesson
[seemed] to be that next year more of everything is needed." "It is hoped that this can
become an annual event," concluded Bleser, as "this year's success has inspired everyone
concerned to continue the program and expand it." Smith concurred, hoping that the
success of the July 4th commemoration "will establish a precedent for a variety of living
history which will continue indefinitely." He also praised Nick Bleser and Mary
Williams for the outcome, and asked the regional office to place in their files "a copy of

3Ibid.
this memorandum . . . as a commendation for an outstanding and ingenious effort in restoring a nineteenth century public use activity to the area."^{4}

The staff knew that it alone could not take credit for the success of the 4th of July venue, and that future celebrations would require closer collaboration with the local community. To that end, the park decided to nominate the Fort Davis Historical Society for the recently established "National Park Service Appreciation Award." The park service in late 1971 had begun planning for the 1972 centennial of the creation of Yellowstone National Park, and as part of the overall public relations campaign sought to "recognize the efforts of individuals and organizations that were instrumental in helping to preserve many of the outstanding examples of natural and historic areas that we enjoy throughout the country today." In their nomination of the society, the Fort Davis staff cited the long relationship between local interest in a park site and the financial and political support they offered the NPS. Superintendent Hambly singled out for consideration the society’s "efforts on the preservation of local history," as well as their contribution to "added knowledge of fort history." Rounding out his recommendation to the NPS was the staff’s declaration that "the Society is also largely responsible for the friendly cooperation, community good will and warm relationships that exist between the citizens of Fort Davis and the National Park Service employees." NPS officials in Washington concurred, bestowing the appreciation award on the historical society on July 18, 1972, with society president Harold Schaafsma, a former superintendent of Great Sand Dunes National Monument who had retired in town, accepting the commendation.\(^5\)

As both the NPS and Fort Davis had now embraced the idea of living history, 1972 offered them the chance to experiment with new ideas and strategies. Derek Hambly discussed with his staff the most pertinent activities that could be staged that year at the park. Their first priority was the July 4th celebration, followed by "personnel presenting programs, either on-site or off-site," that referred to the Yellowstone centennial "at least once during each presentation." Lesser initiatives included stamping letters at the park with a centennial symbol, listing the birth of the Park Service concept on interpretive literature given to visitors, and the staff’s suggestion that "the Centennial Commission consider supplying a plaque of some kind to be set up on information desks to remind the visitor of the celebration." Reflecting the prevalent attitude in the NPS about women’s roles in the parks, Fort Davis was asked to develop a program for "area wives." Superintendent Hambly suggested that spouses of the park staff could distribute posters to area businesses and organizations. They could also sell medallions of the centennial at special park occasions. Hambly did ask the wives of his staff what activities most interested them, and learned that "the wives of this area would like very

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\(^5\)Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, November 7, 1971, July 18, 1972, FODA Historical Society, Legislative Efforts File, FODA Library.
much to correspond with their counterparts in other countries if they can be supplied with
the names and addresses of such people." The Fort Davis area women could invite
women of foreign nations to visit the United States, and "could possible arrange
accommodations for them either at nearby accommodations or in our homes."6

Momentum gained through the living history venues and park service focus upon
its own past spurred the Fort Davis staff to examine other means of reaching visitors
with programs and activities. At the same time, the emphasis of Fort Davis on military
life often precluded adoption of broader based interpretation that would include issues of
race, gender, and family and community life as these played out in the nineteenth
century. Yet the park attempted more than its peers in the region to show the larger
dimensions of western history. Albert Schroeder, regional interpretive specialist, visited
Fort Davis in the summer of 1973, and offered to Derek Hambly and his employees "our
congratulations on the development of your new living history programs on cavalry
equipment demonstration, army health and sanitation problems, the role of the frontier
army wife, and the making of adobes." Schroeder also noted that "you are very
fortunate in having so many active VIP's (Volunteers in Parks) and EEA's to help you
put on these living history programs." The region's chief of interpretation worried that
Fort Davis might have to drop some of their activities, and asked Hambly to "please let
us know so that other fort areas in our region might consider using some of your ideas."
He made special mention of the staff's "two skits on tape," which he called "excellent
presentations;" "the one on horse gear," and "the one on troop and Indian life." He
praised the imagination of the park employees, and suggested that "you submit these
skits, particularly the one on horse gear, for the [regional] interpretive training kit
program."7

The journey of living history at Fort Davis was not always as smooth as reflected
in the plaudits of Albert Schroeder. Doug McChristian contemplated the strengths and
weaknesses of the past summer's programs in a memorandum to Derek Hambly in
November 1974. The supervisory park ranger judged that season's activities as having
gone "fairly well, but did not approach the degree of success for which I had hoped."
McChristian cited three reasons for the mixed success of living history that year, the first being
his own lack of organization and "being tied to a desk too much." He promised Hambly
that both he and Mary Williams "will be spending more time out on interpretation and
first-hand supervision." McChristian hoped that this would "have the benefits of
boosting morale and allow us to quickly correct any problems which may arise." Related
to the issue of supervision was the amount of time the ranger spent in "construction and
repair of Living History equipment." "Better planning, an early start, and more

6Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Centennial Coordinator, November 23, 1971, February 2, 1972,
FODA Reading Files; Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, November 16, 1973, RG79, NPS,

7Memorandum of Albert H. Schroeder, SWR Interpretive Specialist, to FODA Superintendent, August
NARA.
delegation of duties," he believed, "should make a more smoothly running operation next season."

McChristian's candor and self-criticism did not preclude more searching analysis of the difficulties awaiting Fort Davis in light of limited budgets, staff training, and visitor understanding of history. "Lack of experience on the parts of our interpreters," he informed Hambly, resulted from the fact that "last summer was the first year, I understand, that Living History was done on a full-scale basis at Fort Davis." "Only two of our people had any prior experience in this type of interpretation," said McChristian, and "that was primarily with the campfire programs." This could be corrected with more training, which McChristian hoped to initiate with the upcoming "Camp of Instruction" the following June at Fort Laramie. The ranger, however, saved his most pointed criticism on the "visitor himself," whom McChristian described as "unprepared for Living History and was, quite often, too lazy to walk to the program site." McChristian suspected that "visitors would like to ask more questions and have more discussions with our interpreters, but lack the knowledge (in the visitors' opinion) to ask us 'worthwhile' questions." His solutions to the passive patron began with having the staff "draw out conversation pertinent to our theme;" a situation that would improve when the interpreters "become more sure of themselves." For his part, McChristian would develop a "photo display at the visitor center to introduce people to our programs and prepare them for the meeting of an 1880s soldier or lady." He could recommend less for the "reluctance of visitors to walk around the fort," with the best option "to have various demonstrations occurring at points around the post in order that the visitor will be 'enticed' to go from point to point, taking a tour of the Fort without being aware of it." 

The realization that visitors needed more dramatic interpretations of the frontier military post led McChristian to identify areas of improvement. His first suggestion for living history was to "extend our VIP service in interpreting our furnished officer's quarters." The ranger had noticed the need "to get some of our ladies trained to tell fact instead of fiction and to do more real interpretation of the frontier army family." McChristian found "no great difficulties" in the park's "picket line demonstration at the cavalry corral," and looked for "better training [of] the interpreters" to make them "more knowledgeable of their subject." He spoke highly of "the cooking demonstration performed by Margaret Ellis," which McChristian admitted "came about primarily through her own initiative." The ranger promised that "next year we will have a rudimentary kitchen fixed up in our one remaining original." He wanted the demonstration moved into an indoor kitchen because of the "safety factor of cooking over an open fire." McChristian expressed some chagrin, however, at the public reaction to "our roving 'Apache,'" because he was "often mistaken for a hippie." The park should

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9Ibid.
provide "an established camp scene" to give the employee "better identity and a better opportunity for interpretation of the Indian life-style." McChristian concluded by recognizing the importance of involving the staff in changing the direction of the living history program, and he planned "to write our more distant seasonals and ask for their comments and suggestions."  

As Fort Davis worked in the winter of 1973-1974 to advance the cause of living history, the staff again offered ideas that would raise the profile of the park within the community and the park service itself. Derek Hambly received word in November 1973 that the NPS would join other federal agencies in planning for the 1976 event known as the "Bicentennial" of the American Revolution. While far west Texas had little to offer the larger historical agenda focusing upon the events along the Eastern seaboard in the late 18th century, the superintendent suggested instead programs germane to the story of the frontier. His staff wanted to work with Fort Bliss to develop an exhibit "showing 200 years of military activity with emphasis on the western areas." Hambly also hoped to "do something to illustrate the black history with emphasis on the black troops that were stationed at Fort Davis." Finally, the park thought that the July 4th celebration could be expanded to include the towns of Alpine and Marfa. Their goal was "to make this big enough to attract attention from the entire Permian Basin area," thus ensuring more focus during the nation's birthday on the importance of the park service to the citizens of west Texas.

Increased momentum regarding living history required the park to cast its net more widely for advice and information that would render its interpretation distinctive. Doug McChristian asked William Haneman of the Texas state health department for his opinion on Fort Davis' plans for food demonstrations. The staff wanted to show "the preparation of food by the army, by Apaches, and by an officer's servant," with the diet consisting of "coffee, hardtack, beans, biscuits, and dishes concocted from native plants in the area such as mesquite beans, berries, and prickly pear." The issue of sensitivity to American Indian culture led Mary Williams to inquire of the "tribal historian" of the Mescalero Apache tribe for help "in verifying the type of shelter, clothing and tools we should have and use." Williams wanted to evoke "the 1870-1880 period - a temporary camp such as one that might have been set up in the Davis Mountains for a short period of time." The park staff would construct "a brush ramada rather than a wickiup," with materials consisting of "cottonwood or mesquite poles set in the ground and connected at the top by crosspoles and covered with thatched grass or hay." The park technician also asked for guidance on the dress of the male and female interpreters who would interpret Apache life (the former a "part Mescalero Apache," the latter a "veteran seasonal . . . [who] has never portrayed the role of an Indian before"). Williams strove to integrate Mescalero opinion into the park's historical program, and did not mind if the

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10 Ibid.

11 Memorandum of Hambly to NPS Public Affairs Officer, December 1, 1973, FODA Reading Files.
Mescaleros "corrected" this venture into Native life (the tribe, however, did not respond to these inquiries).\footnote{McChristian to William Haneman, Texas State Dept. of Health, El Paso, November 28, 1973; Williams to Tribal Historian, Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation, NM, January 11, 1974, FODA Reading Files.}

Doug McChristian's promotion of training for better interpretation of the story of Fort Davis led him to attend the 1974 "Camp of Instruction" offered by the park service staff at Fort Laramie National Monument in Wyoming. The Fort Davis ranger sought not only ideas for better historical programs, but also thoughts on developing a similar gathering of NPS rangers the following summer at his own park. His report upon returning from Fort Laramie in July indicated that the experience was valuable, even if it also highlighted shortcomings in the operations to be avoided at Fort Davis. He noted that fatigue affected many attendees, and that alcoholic consumption disturbed those who tried to get sleep in the evenings. "The firing on the range," thought McChristian, "could have been conducted in a more orderly and strict manner for the sake of increased safety;" a condition for which the Fort Davis ranger took blame "as this was my responsibility." As for his colleagues, "it seemed to me that many of our would-be cavalry troopers knew little or nothing about horses and did not really care to learn." McChristian recommended that the next camp assign "stable duty right off," so that attendees "would learn that horses were the first concern of cavalry soldiers and not just a disagreeable detail to be put off until someone else decided to do it."\footnote{Memorandum of McChristian to Fort Laramie (FOLA) Supervisory Historian, July 17, 1974, FODA Reading Files.}

It was McChristian's suggestion about limiting invitees to the next instruction camp that reveals much about the challenge facing the Park Service in matters of social and cultural sensitivity. The ranger's peers included women, most of whom McChristian described as having "no purpose in being there." The Fort Davis employee was quick to qualify his remarks to the Fort Laramie supervisory historian: "I realize that this sounds quite discriminatory, but that is not my intention." What bothered McChristian was that "women should not be portraying soldiers in Living History interpretation." Presaging an argument about gender and military service nationwide in the 1980s, McChristian offered as his rationale: "Since this particular course is concerned only with military interpretation I can find no justification for sending female seasonals to do it." He conceded that "a female supervisor in charge of such programs would be a legitimate participant." The problem at the Fort Laramie camp was that "none of the six females . . . occupied such positions." One operated the visitor's desk at her park, and McChristian wondered: "How she was going to benefit from a military Living History course is beyond me." The ranger blamed superintendents who sent to the camp "on the opinion that 'any training is better than none.'" McChristian preferred the gender segregation found in the "very appropriate course, 19th Century domestic Arts," which he said "is offered specifically for female interpreters." Compounding the unfairness of uninterested women at the camp was McChristian's supposition that "some male
seasonals in real need of this training might have been turned down because the class was already filled." If women could be excluded from the next year's program, the NPS could then drop such classes as "baking... in favor of such topics as: the relationship of privates, non-coms, and officers, the uniform and how to wear it, life on a post, and life on campaign." Baking, McChristian concluded, symbolized the weaknesses of the Fort Laramie experience, and the culinary sessions were "too time consuming for the benefit derived."14

McChristian's positive experiences at Fort Laramie outweighed the negatives, as he recommended to Superintendent Hambly that Fort Davis conduct a cavalry "patrol" as part of its Bicentennial activities. This would take a group of riders dressed in period costume and carrying only authentic food and gear, on a route to Van Horn Wells. Many details had to be addressed, such as the need for permission to cross private lands between Fort Davis and the termination point. The superintendent liked the idea, and invited as participants the 3rd Cavalry of Fort Bliss, which would represent the "pre-civil war era," while the "Tenth Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers, Inc." of Los Angeles, could provide both the post-1865 drama and the link to the black units who made Fort Davis prominent in military history circles. Training for this and other Bicentennial venues could come from Fort Davis' own camp of instruction, which McChristian proposed for June 1975. His goal was "to instruct permanent and seasonal employees in the basics of Indian Wars military Living History." The group should consist of no more than 25 NPS and other agency employees who were "planning or are already doing this type of interpretation of the 1865-1890 period." "As a word of caution," McChristian reminded the regional chief of interpretation that "a few people were sent to the Fort Laramie session with, in the opinions of the instructors, little or no justification." While he did not specifically call for the exclusion of women, McChristian believed that "by sending such employees to the Camp, ... we would be defeating our purpose of upgrading frontier military Living History, and would possibly prevent a person with a real need from attending."15

Potential employees of Fort Davis needed to prepare for this massive program of reenactments and historical research, and Superintendent Hambly's letter of November 16, 1974, to Michael Tibbs of Texas A&M University revealed how much the concept of the living past had suffused the work of Fort Davis employees. "At Fort Davis," said Hambly, "there were no great battles or other historically memorable events." This had required the staff to examine "the everyday drudgery of life in a frontier fort." Anyone interested in employment at the park would need a familiarity with "activities such as the operation of a frontier kitchen; drill and fatigue duties of an enlisted man including stable duties, adobe manufacture, wood cutting, and care of livestock; demonstrations or discussions of post medical problems; and the reconstruction of an officers house of the

14 Ibid.
15 Hambly to the President, Tenth Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers, Inc., Hollywood, CA, August 30, 1974; Memorandum of McChristian to SWR Chief, Division of Interpretation, September 11, 1974, FODA Reading Files.
1880 period." Hambly took pride in the exquisite attention to detail at Fort Davis, where "the post garden supplies vegetables to the kitchen, wood cutting details supply fuel for the kitchen stove, the manufactured adobe brick is later used to replace eroded adobe from the various ruins, . . . and food service was always a sanitary problem for the post surgeon." If all of this work came together into a cohesive dramatization, Hambly assured Tibbs that the visitor would "come away with a better appreciation and knowledge of the hardships, customs, and complexities of the human experience during this segment of American history."\(^{16}\)

This latter concern about accuracy and realism affected both McChristian's camp of instruction and his cavalry patrol in the spring and summer of 1975. Derek Hambly must have received some comment on his ranger's disapproval of women's participation in the camp, as he told the Fort Union superintendent that "we realize that some of our female interpreters could benefit from such training even though they are not directly involved." Yet Hambly bowed to the wishes of McChristian and other male attendees by limiting the scope of the program to "those actively engaged in interpreting the life of the frontier soldier." For female employees of the federal agency, Hambly noted that "we are working on plans to have a frontier women's course during the bicentennial year of 1976 which will be somewhat discriminatory towards the male interpreters."\(^{17}\)

Nineteen seventy-five witnessed the maturing of the Fort Davis living history concept, as both the cavalry patrol and camp of instruction met the expectations of McChristian and Hambly. On March 25, McChristian and Joe Garcia of the park staff set out with two members of the Hollywood black soldier stunt unit to traverse the 80 miles from the post to Van Horn Wells. Described by Hambly as "a bicentennial event designed to commemorate the role of the cavalry in the West," the trip proved so successful that McChristian received NPS authorization to repeat the journey that September. On this occasion, he was accompanied by seven additional park service employees from Forts Davis, Laramie, Bowie, Union, and Larned. Regional photographer Fred Mang joined the group to record the occasion for the park service, and McChristian considered the experience "invaluable . . . for any interpreter who is involved in the explanation of military activities of the 1880's." This, coupled with the equally successful camp of instruction, offered NPS employees fortunate enough to attend such "wonderful experiences" as "saddle sores, bad food, heat and wind, and a score of other sensations that these men experienced if only for a week at a time."\(^{18}\)

With so much attention paid to Doug McChristian's military history venues, it would have been easy for the Fort Davis staff to overlook the central feature of America's 200th birthday: the 4th of July celebration. Indeed, Derek Hambly had

\(^{16}\)Hambly to Michael Tibbs, College Station, TX, November 16, 1974, FODA Reading Files.

\(^{17}\)Memorandum of Hambly to Fort Union (FOUN) Superintendent, December 3, 1974, FODA Reading Files.

\(^{18}\)Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, October 31, 1975; Hambly to H.B. Pennell, Santa Barbara, CA, December 2, 1975, FODA Reading Files.
learned that "many small, local communities were sponsoring their own Bicentennial celebrations." Yet the attachment of locals to their own festivities at the park brought 2,038 visitors on that day; "a new one day record for the area," said a pleased superintendent. A breathtaking array of events kept the patrons busy all afternoon, from the noon parade that stretched three-quarters of a mile, to the barbecue feast served to 800 guests to the youth rodeo. "Visitors to the Fort," reported Hambly, "ranged in age from a few months to ninety-nine years." "Despite the advance ages of many of the visitors," which when "combined with the heat, and altitude," made health conditions less than ideal, the crowds poured through the restored buildings and visitor center. Hambly's only regret was that the recently refurbished post commissary could not be opened to the public "because of the need to use personnel from that area for traffic control." 19

Whether through ancillary features like training camps and horse patrols, or community-wide gatherings like the 4th of July, by 1976 living history had become a critical feature of the success of Fort Davis as a unit within the park service. David M. Brugge, chief of the region's division of interpretation and visitor services, came to the park after the July festivities to learn that "Fort Davis has a well-rounded interpretive program with personal services, museum exhibits, demonstrations, wayside devices, publications, and an audio program." "Living history," Brugge further reported, "is emphasized." He noted the departure of Doug McChristian from the staff, and praised Mary Williams, who "has been supervising the interpretive program alone for several months and doing a very good job." The Santa Fe official observed that the "Indian camp, used as a living history project last year, is no longer in use." He recommended the "re-institution of this portion of the program," with "more research and planning" to ensure its accuracy. He also mentioned that "a good paperback book on the Mescalero Apaches is needed, but I know of none to fill this gap." Brugge had similar thoughts on the museum exhibit of the buffalo soldiers, which he believed needed "up-dating to take into account more recently published research." This process of revising the Fort Davis story would also have a salutary effect on the staff, as new ideas and concepts would "help keep up interest and morale, so that the presentations do not become routinized." 20

As often happens upon completion of some major national historic occurrence, public attention shifts back to more private concerns, leaving those who had devoted time and money in promotion of the American story without the patronage or resources to maximize the investment. Such was the case for the NPS and Fort Davis in the remaining years of the 1970s. In March 1977, the NPS' Denver Service Center asked Kenneth Hornback, chief of the DSC's statistical section, to craft prescriptive attendance figures for the Park Service's two units in the Big Bend/Davis Mountains area. Despite

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19 Memorandum of Hambly to SWR Director, July 6, 1976, FODA Reading Files.

20 Memorandum of David M. Brugge, Anthropologist/Curator, SWR Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, to the Chief, SWR Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, July 20, 1976, RG79, NPS, SWRO, GA Files 1971-1973, Box 300, Folder: A5425a 1974-1976 FODA, Denver NARA.
all the attention garnered by living history, Fort Davis could anticipate only modest growth in its patronage. Hornback speculated that, based upon visitor totals from 1967-1976, the old military post would welcome only 70,200 people in 1981, and some 77,000 five years later. These numbers could also plummet to 31,300 (1981) and 19,000 (1986). Part of the problem with Fort Davis was the statistical aberration of the 1966 dedication ceremonies, compounding the national trend downward in visitation due to the mid-1970s gasoline shortages. "It is believed that the local population accounts for a sizeable proportion of the park's visitors," Hornback reported; a situation to be monitored in light of census data showing Jeff Davis County decreasing in numbers. The Denver statistician explained the decline of visitation as the fact that "the novelty of the park has worn off for local visitors." In addition, "the competition resulting from the opening of state parks near Fort Davis during this period" could have played a role, as did the general economic recession. Hornback did offer some good news: "The downward trend is about to bottom out and a slow increase will be seen." He used as his rationale the logic that economic times and energy constraints would eventually improve, as well as the data from the first two months of 1977, where there had been "a four percent increase over the same period for 1976 in cars entering the park, and a two percent increase in visits."\(^{21}\)

Fort Davis tried in the last years of the decade to sustain the momentum witnessed at the peak of living history's dominance in Park Service historical interpretation. When Robert F. Nichols, regional interpretive specialist and archeologist, came to the park in July 1978, he found that the staff in general maintained enthusiasm for teaching the public about daily life at a frontier post. He judged the quality of the cooperative students that summer "outstanding," and reiterated David Brugge's praise for the work of Mary Williams as supervisor of the seasonal employees. "My personal reaction," Nichols told his superiors in Santa Fe, "was that the living history program at Fort Davis is by far the best such program I have encountered." All this could have been improved, however, if the supervisory park ranger would take more responsibility for the daily management of living history. "The overall program does not have the sort of overall direction it needs," wrote Nichols, resulting in "a natural tendency to slip into the rut of talking about things (naming items) rather than using them to discuss activities, functions and roles."\(^{22}\)

This situation did not improve as the decade drew to a close. Doug McChristian, now working in the regional office as an interpretive specialist, in conducting the 1979 review of the post's historical activities reiterated Nichols' complaints against the supervisory park ranger. This left the seasonal staff suffering from "a lack of direction and general support." From this, in McChristian's estimation, came "generally low

\(^{21}\)Memorandum of Kenneth Hornback, Chief, DSC Statistical Section, to SWR Director (Attn: Mary Beth Gallegos, SWR Protection and Visitor Use Management), March 22, 1977, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Fort Worth FRC.

\(^{22}\)Trip Report, Robert F. Nichols, SWR Interpretive Specialist (Archeology), to Chief, SWR Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, September 6, 1978, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Fort Worth FRC.
morale and, in some instances, rather mediocre performances by frontline interpreters obviously having high potential." The latter condition was especially evident with those reenacting the life of soldiers, who were "left pretty much to their own devices as to what is worn and used." McChristian was surprised to find that the park had not numbered the various structures and ruins, leaving visitors unable or unwilling "to try to locate themselves and a particular site on the map in the guide." He also echoed Robert Nichols' lament about the "object oriented" nature of the seasonals' presentations. He did extend praise to Mary Williams' strategy to make living history understandable to children, which she also offered in area schools. Unfortunately, the park did not have suitable reading materials for sale to young people, while it offered such marginal publications as Arizona Highways. "Perhaps SPMA could look into the possibility," said McChristian, "of contracting a designer who could produce something [for children] on frontier military/Indian history which could be sold at several outlets."^23

[^23]Trip Report, Douglas McChristian, to Chief, SWR Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, July 18, 1979; Memorandum of Hambly to NPS Cultural Education Specialist, May 18, 1977, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Fort Worth FRC.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Refining the Message, Defending the Resources:
The Quest for Institutional Support, 1980-1996

On a crisp fall morning in November 1995, the buildings and grounds of Fort Davis National Historic Site stood as empty as when the post was abandoned a century before. The eerie silence occurred because of the failure of the U.S. Congress and the President to agree on a budget for the federal government. For the third time in 15 years, park personnel were "furloughed," or sent home indefinitely because their parent agency, the Interior department, had received no congressional appropriation with which to operate. Thus the park staff could not fulfill the mission mandated by Congress 35 years earlier to preserve the past for the future, and to instruct the visiting public about the heritage and tradition of the Davis Mountains.

It was fitting that the restored example of the "finest frontier military post in the Southwest" had no visitors or staff in the week before Thanksgiving, as the last two decades of the twentieth century bore little resemblance to Fort Davis' first 20 years of existence. A more conservative political climate under the presidential administrations of Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Bill Clinton reduced spending overall to public agencies. This meant that parks like Fort Davis would receive less attention and funding, especially as Congress continued to establish new units of the park service. From personnel to preservation to interpretive services, the staff and management of Fort Davis spent much of the latter part of the century consolidating the gains of the 1960s and 1970s, while trying to find more creative means to advance the cause of history in the far Southwest.¹

The four superintendents that managed Fort Davis in its third and fourth decades of existence all faced the challenge of enhancing the richness and variety of historic resources that the park service had inherited and preserved. From Doug McChristian (1980-1986) to Steve Miller (1986-1988) to Kevin Cheri (1988-1992) to Jerry Yarbrough (1992-present), the park's directors and staff knew that they would not soon return to the days of 1960s restoration, or the excitement of creating the living history programs of the 1970s. Perusal of their correspondence and reports, along with oral interviews, indicates the maturing process of Fort Davis as a park service unit, along with the need for staff and managers alike to be ever more thoughtful in meeting the needs of visitors and guarding the historical tradition of the old frontier post. This process began in the spring of 1980, when former supervisory ranger Doug McChristian returned to manage the park. In a 1994 interview, McChristian remembered how he wished to "influence the history of an area," and how concerned he had been as a special assistant in the Southwest Regional Office about the "decline of quality in the living history program." His first objective became the revitalization of the work that he and Mary Williams had

¹Jerry Yarbrough interview, August 11, 1995.
undertaken in the early 1970s to bring the past to life, with better maintenance of the ruins and their foundations as allied priorities.² McChristian's personnel, like many public officials in the early 1980s, found it difficult to accept the political rhetoric ushered in by the so-called "Reagan Revolution." The conservative Republican had swept to victory in the 1980 election by promising to "get government off the backs of the American people," and suggesting that those employed in public service did not measure up to the standards of the private sector. Reagan's promise to reduce federal spending for domestic programs, and expand dramatically the appropriations for the nation's armed forces, marked a significant shift in emphasis from the more generous spending habits of the Democrats in the White House and Congress. Compounding this was Reagan's choice as Interior secretary James Watt, an arch-conservative lawyer from Wyoming whose Mountain States Legal Foundation had championed the causes of the "Sagebrush Rebellion;" a 1970s protest movement originating in the public land states of the arid West, with citizens outraged at the regulatory power of federal officials and their perceived insensitivity towards the property rights of individual landowners.³


Even before the inauguration of Ronald Reagan in January 1981, Supervisory Park Ranger James A. Blackburn had to issue a memorandum to the staff entitled, "Support for Public Policy." He had noticed that "certain remarks made by employees in the presence of visitors have not thoroughly supported public policy of the United States Government." Conceding that his staff had the right of free speech, Blackburn nonetheless wanted no one "making remarks that might lead a visitor or other employee to feel that we do not care for the job or policy of our government (our employer)." The supervisory ranger recognized "the austerity of our present financial posture;" a condition that he agreed had "resulted in curtailed programs and reduced visitor services in the area of interpretation." Yet the Fort Davis staff "have not reduced our visitor services when it comes to quality -- if anything, we are constantly improving quality." Blackburn asked his colleagues "to provide our visitors with a positive outlook," and "to curtail negativism." If the staff would "all take a look at ourselves," they would realize that "we all experience some dissatisfaction with the restraints imposed upon us." Yet "we can gain public support," said the ranger, "by portraying to our visitors a can-do attitude; one that says we are aware of certain limitations in funding and personnel," and one that would keep "this dissatisfaction from showing to our visitors."4

The superintendent had to acknowledge that the ambition of the MPS in the 1960s had given way to a more conservative time. In the 1970s, the Park Service had refurnished several buildings at Fort Davis, including an officer's quarters, a kitchen and servants' quarters, and the post commissary. Yet these facilities required personnel to interpret their story to the visiting public, and historians to research that story. McChristian soon realized upon his return to Fort Davis that one reason for the perceived "decline" in living history was the reduction in staff in the late 1970s. In a memorandum to the regional office in March 1981, the superintendent provided a table of hiring trends since 1975. In the division of interpretation, for example, there had been ten seasonals that year, along with two permanent staff and three "Cooperative Education" employees. By 1980 the Park Service, responding to declines in congressional support, reduced the number of workers at the park. The regional office also lowered the pay grades for new hires; a pattern that McChristian called "a false economy because it naturally tended to lower the quality of programs and caused some activities to be canceled entirely." A second indicator of the fiscal constraints of the 1970s was the requirement by Congress that the MPS absorb the "Classified Pay Increase" (CPI) in each park's operating budget. Rampant inflation in the years after the conflict in Vietnam had driven consumer prices and wages upward in a seemingly endless spiral, as much a function of the rise in energy prices as in the explosion of government spending criticized by conservative politicians. McChristian would thus have to find money in his allocation from Santa Fe to cover 60 percent of the staff's pay raises; a situation that he called "the single most [important] factor adversely affecting the park's funding." This meant no hiring of seasonals for the

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4Memorandum of James A. Blackburn, FODA Supervisory Park Ranger, to "All I&RM Staff," January 10, 1981, FODA Reading Files.
summer of 1981, delays in standard maintenance procedures (such as mowing the grounds, painting the trim on buildings, clearing of nature trails, etc.).

Since a commitment to public service was a hallmark of the NPS, and because Fort Davis represented a signal achievement in living history interpretation, McChristian decided to press forward with as thorough a program of storytelling, reenactments, and scholarly research as his budget limitations allowed. In May 1980, he provided his staff with a clear explanation of his principles and goals. "I believe that we have an obligation to insure that what [the visitors] are seeing, touching, tasting, and so forth," said the superintendent, "is a worthy substitute for the real thing." He challenged the idea that "visitors won't know the difference anyway" by suggesting that it was "unprofessional" and misleading to the public to denigrate the personal nature of living history. "Visitors look to us as the experts," said McChristian, "and depend upon us to be correct." He extended the quest for "authenticity" to the daily dress of his staff "from the skin out," mindful that wool undergarments were "often uncomfortable at first to a 20th Century person." Nonetheless, accuracy in detail meant "interpreting life by their standards [the nineteenth-century frontier]," so that the staff could dramatize to visitors "the contrasts between the quality of life then and now, changes in style and custom, health factors, and the uses of energy as contrasted with the present day."

Interpreting the authenticity of Fort Davis through living history led McChristian to develop plans to study other aspects of the park's natural and cultural resources. He asked Dr. James T. Nelson, professor of range animal science at Sul Ross State University, to undertake a vegetation study "to recreate and maintain the natural features" that "accurately reflect the historic scene of the late 19th century." The superintendent needed base maps of vegetation such as "grasses, trees, shrubs, and cacti." He also wanted to know of the "various vegetative zones," the plant life "now present but exotic to the area," and those plants "not present but ... probably a part of the historic scene." Yet Fort Davis also faced intrusion into the serenity of the park with the increase of Air Force flight testing in the Davis Mountains. Superintendent McChristian had to write in February 1981 to Colonel Harold Dortch, commander of Tactical Training at Holloman Air Force Base (HAFB), to complain as his predecessors had of the "sonic booms" occurring as part of the overflights of high-speed aircraft. "I hope that you share our concern for preserving our nation's military history," said McChristian, since "a public that has the opportunity of understanding our military's role and traditions are more likely to be supportive of its actions today." The Air Force, however, did not respond to the superintendent's entreaties, leading McChristian in November 1981 to complain to regional officials: "Apparently, the Air Force would like me to believe that I am imagining things." McChristian and his staff contended that "when one hears a thunderbolt-like crack from a cloudless sky and feels the entire building tremble, he can

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5Memorandum of McChristian to the Executive Director, SPMA, September 9, 1980; Memorandum of McChristian to the SWR Director, March 19, 1981, FODA Reading Files.

6Memorandum of McChristian to Interpretive Division Staff, FODA, May 20, 1980, FODA Reading Files.
assume either an F-15 has overflown the area or that the Almighty is upset with the National Park Service." The staff thus had no choice but to record the time and date of the sonic booms, since "until we have hard evidence upon which to base our complaint, we cannot present a convincing case for claiming possible damage to the structures at Fort Davis."  

A critical factor for the staff and management of the park was the continued imbalance of interpretation of the black experience at the post. Prompted by the NPS' inquiry about Fort Davis' "Minority Interpretation Action Plan," the staff discussed in 1980 what Mary Williams described as "the positive and negative aspects of our interpretive programs as they effect and are affected by minority cultures." As part of Doug McChristian's call for more authenticity in telling the Fort Davis story, the staff reviewed its exhibits, collections, publications, and interpretive presentations. They discovered, for example, that two slides in the museum audio-video program that supposedly depicted black troopers of the 9th Cavalry "actually were of white soldiers." The noted Southwestern artist Rogers Aston donated to Fort Davis "two beautiful historically accurate bronzes - one of an Apache Indian and the other of a Buffalo Soldier." Mary Williams acknowledged that these statues replaced "a large copy of a [Frederick] Remington sketch of an Apache and a Buffalo Soldier" because the original, "like some of Remington's other sketches of black men, . . . depicted the Buffalo Soldier as a very physically unattractive person." Fort Davis also redesigned the "shared officers' quarters" to represent the rooms of Lieutenant Henry Flipper, and also examined the possibility of commemorating in 1981 the centennial of Flipper's court martial. Less successful were the staff's efforts to hire a black seasonal. One young man from Howard University in Washington, DC, wrote that he could not afford to move to Fort Davis, while a second student from Tuskegee Institute in Alabama reported that "because of personal problems he could not accept the appointment." Fort Davis then turned to Sul Ross for help, but "no qualified black students have expressed any interest in the program." 

Given the ongoing problems of operating an historic site with limited staffing, Doug McChristian decided in December 1981 to speak forthrightly about the "core mission declaration" requested by the Southwest Region. He oversaw a park unit with some 120 buildings and ruins, not to mention "an unknown number of structure sites, especially with regard to the First Fort area, [that] remain to be located precisely within the 460-acre site." The superintendent also commented that "by the very nature of the historic fabric, largely adobe along with wood and stone, the primary resource is extremely fragile and subject to deterioration from natural and human causes."
McChristian anticipated that Fort Davis would welcome "approximately 95,000 visitors during the target year [1982]," and suggested that he and his staff would keep open as many facilities as possible without new personnel. This meant that little if any work could be conducted on historical research or artifact cataloguing, which McChristian estimated at 30,000 items.  

The regional office's concern over Fort Davis' ability to meet the demands of visitors prompted a visit to the park in August 1981 by Joseph Sanchez, chief of the SWR division of interpretation and visitor services. Sanchez had worked for one month at the park in early 1980 as its acting superintendent, receiving high praise from the staff for his "keen interest in better cultural resource management and historical accuracy," the latter including his advice on "the revision of the park brochure so that it better reflects the role of the Black troops at Fort Davis." Sanchez, who in the late 1980s would direct the NPS-funded Spanish Colonial Research Center at the University of New Mexico, noted upon his arrival at the park that "Fort Davis is exceptionally and professionally run." He credited the staff with being "especially attentive to visitors," and saw them presenting "a positive image for the National Park Service." Sanchez reported that better access to the refurbished quarters could be provided to the handicapped (a situation that Superintendent McChristian agreed to correct), and then closed by commenting upon the problems of the location of the visitors center in the barracks building north of the administrative offices. "Because the administrative center is the building visitors approach first and often enter," said Sanchez, "it occurs to park management that the circulation pattern to the museum is illogical and confusing." The staff discussed with him the reversal of facilities "to provide a safe emergency exit for visitors to the museum which currently has no rear exit." In addition, "the electrical system in the museum is near the entry way and itself would become affected . . . if something would go wrong." Reversing the order of visitor and administrative facilities would obviate the phenomenon, said Sanchez, where "confused visitors approach the Superintendent's office first."  

One feature of Fort Davis' interpretive work that contributed to the glowing report of Joseph Sanchez was the dedication service for the Commanding Officer's Quarters. Some 400 guests arrived at the park on the morning of May 16, 1981, to join with NPS personnel from the Southwest Region, the Denver Service Center, and the Harpers Ferry Center. The COQ had been a favorite of local residents; a tie strengthened by the presence in the area of two of Benjamin Grierson's sons in the community for many years after the closing of the fort. The public speakers included Bruce Dinges, acting editor of the publication, Arizona and the West, whose specialty was the life of General Grierson, and Robert M. Utley, recently retired as assistant NPS director for park historic preservation (as well as deputy executive director for the

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9 Memorandum of McChristian to the SWR Director, December 2, 1981, FODA Reading Files.

10 Memorandum of Acting Superintendent, FODA, to the SWR Director, March 11, 1980, FODA Reading Files; Trip Report of Joseph Sanchez, Chief, Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, SWR, August 12-13, 1981, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Fort Worth FRC.
President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation). Utley offered the keynote address on "Fort Davis' role in westward expansion;" a subject that he had championed two decades earlier in the initiative to create the park.¹¹

Doug McChristian's first two years as Fort Davis' superintendent had a salutary effect upon visitation, as patrons appreciated the ambition of the park staff and its willingness to overcome obstacles. McChristian's second year saw an 11 percent increase in visitor totals, which he attributed to the "stabilization of gasoline prices, increased attention on the Davis Mountains area due to articles in leisure magazines, and increase in population centers such as Odessa and Midland, which are experiencing rapid growth as oil producing centers." This volume of visitors also prompted record sales in the SPMA book exhibit, which increased 49 percent over 1980. In return, the Tucson-based SPMA donated over $7,000 for such items as library materials, "a wayside exhibit for the chapel to include information on the Court Martial of Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper," a "five-day training course for interpretation of the Indian Wars enlisted soldier," and to "improve women's living history attire for the site's interpretive program." Special visitation included "ten members of the State of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department," who attended a one-day seminar on living history interpretation. Superintendent McChristian also recognized the growing contribution of the park's volunteers (23), who donated over 1,000 hours as tour guides, living history interpreters at the historic buildings, and as aides in the library and photograph collection.¹²

Emphasis on the story of Fort Davis also drew the attention of scholars, donors, and public and private agencies devoted to the promotion of tourism and travel in the region. Superintendent McChristian became intrigued at the work of Dr. Robert F. Newkirk of the Cooperative Programs Study Unit in the Department of Recreation and Parks at Texas A&M University. Newkirk sought potential research projects for his students at the College Station campus, and the Fort Davis staff was only too eager to oblige. Mary Williams compiled a list of topics that included the history of the Overland Trail, the development of the town of Fort Davis, an administrative history of the park, work on the sub-posts around Fort Davis, and oral histories of descendants of military personnel stationed at the fort. McChristian himself expressed to Newkirk the need for "a historical base map covering the 460-acre site." "Considering the current low emphasis on studies," said the superintendent, "it will probably be some time before funding is available for this project." McChristian also wondered about Newkirk's interest in "a good military and structural history of the First Fort Davis." The superintendent's inquiries of the Texas A&M professor were also stimulated by the suggestion of the regional office in October 1982 that history departments might have graduate students willing to conduct the research and writing that the park service could no longer support. "Perhaps the [regional] Division of History could act as a 'clearing


house' for such requests," said McChristian, as "most history related studies seem to get low priorities these days."13

The need for this research activity was apparent to Charles McCurdy, SWR's chief of interpretation and visitor services, who came to Fort Davis in July 1982 on the regional office's annual inspection of the park's historical work. McCurdy, who had last spent time at Fort Davis in November 1980, walked with the superintendent and his interpretive chief, John Sutton, through the refurnished COQ, the post commissary, and the hospital. "The park staff," said McCurdy, "has done a nice job in making the hospital accessible through means of a catwalk passing through it and interpreting it by means of small easels that reveal facets of the world of the hospital in the late 1880's." "Park visitors seem to enjoy themselves at the Fort," the regional official noted; a condition that he attributed to the staff's "good training and good reading." Earning special mention from McCurdy was the portrayal of the soldiers, who "made a nice counterpoint to the refurnished buildings that draw so much interest." He did express concern that the 30,000 artifacts, many of which had been unearthed in the 1969 archeological survey, "remain uncatalogued and many need conservation treatment." Superintendent McChristian informed McCurdy that he would convert a maintenance position to a museum technician who could "do maintenance-type chores." Another issue for the regional interpretive chief was that "the [museum] exhibits are due for a change." Robert Utley's design, which had charmed Lady Bird Johnson at the 1966 dedication, now seemed in the 1980s to "convey more of a story about the development of the Fort than the purpose of the Fort and events on the Indian campaign." McCurdy sympathized with the constraints placed upon the staff, and suggested that the regional office provide Fort Davis with "career interpreter training [in] curatorial methods, and interpretive operations management." He could not resist closing with admiration for the location of the park, noting that "the area looked well cared for," and that "altogether, it's a nice experience to spend the day there and see a well run operation."14

One comment made by McCurdy that the park took to heart was his call for an "Interpretive Prospectus," which John Sutton drafted in November 1982. Superintendent McChristian asked Edwin C. Bearss, chief historian for the park service, to review Sutton's ideas. Bearss turned to a former park historian at Fort Davis, Ben Levy, then senior historian on Bearss' staff. Levy's remarks, however, left McChristian confused about their endeavors to define the park's standing in the NPS. Levy commended Sutton for his "well intentioned" ideas, but reminded the park staff that "these issues . . . need to be addressed against the backdrop of history and the reality of policies and costs." The NPS senior historian criticized what he called "the inexorable development from

13John M. Sutton, Acting Superintendent, FODA, to Dr. Robert Newkirk, Cooperative Programs Study Unit, Department of Recreation and Parks, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, December 23, 1982, FODA Reading Files; McChristian to Newkirk, December 14, 1982; Memorandum of McChristian to the SWR Director, October 28, 1982, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Fort Worth FRC.

14Trip Report of Charles H. McCurdy, Chief, Division of Interpretation & Visitor Services, SWR, July 9, 1982, RG79, NPS, FODA Files, Fort Worth FRC.
stabilization through rehab [rehabilitation], restoration, reconstruction, and refurnishing even though more limited objectives were the stated intention originally." Levy disliked the fact that "stabilization and restoration" had become "a cloak for more expansive ends," and he stated: "A halt should be called once and for all to the refurnishing objective." He called it "contrary to the policy and the exception that it is needed for interpretive purposes is not justified." As for the vaunted efforts to refurnish the officers’ quarters at Fort Davis, Levy saw these as "essentially conjectural." "There are already questionable furnishings installed" at the park, and others concurred in his judgment. "I say let’s call a halt and go back to the original intention of preserving the fort essentially through minimum protective measures," wrote Levy. The discussion about the visitor center/administrative offices location prompted Levy to remark: "I too, recognized the foolishness of placing the Offices in the south end of HB-20 and the Museum in the north end." At the same time, Levy disagreed with park staff that the "wordiness" of the museum’s label copy alienated visitors. "My observation," reported the senior NPS historian, "was that the adults found every word interesting and followed the story line in an unhurried fashion." He found more irritating the park service’s recent shift to "so-called open museums [a reference to the technique of displaying artifacts in open space, rather than in some pattern for visitors to follow]," with their "unacceptable visitor confusion." Levy instead called upon Fort Davis to "refurbish the existing museum," move it to the south wing, and "utilize another area for the innovative display." 15

15Sutton, "Interpretive Prospectus for Fort Davis National Historic Site," November 1, 1982, FODA Reading Files; Memorandum of Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian, NPS, to the Chief, Division of Interpretative Planning, NPS Harpers Ferry Center, December 8, 1982; Memorandum of Levy to Bearss, December 2, 1982, H30 Interpretive Prospectus (1982) File, FODA Library.
to San Angelo to join the annual Fort Concho fiesta. All these activities demonstrated
the commitment of Fort Davis to keeping the story of the western military alive, and
contributed to another good year of attendance, with a five percent increase (75,056).
In like manner, these visitors patronized the SPMA book exhibit handsomely, resulting
in an 18 percent rise in book sales. The only cautionary note about visitation in 1982
was the decline of Mexican visitors, which McChristian believed resulted from "the
devaluation of the Mexican peso."\(^{16}\)

By 1983, the park staff had realized, as had the NPS in general, that there would
be little new money for continued expansion of the legislative mandate that Congress had
given to Fort Davis. The national economy had slumped in the winter of 1982-1983 to
its lowest point since World War II, and unemployment stood at its highest level since
the depths of the Great Depression (nearly 11 percent). Thus the park service began
serious discussions about solicitation of private funds to improve the quality of NPS
programs and units. Fort Davis already had a private organization that had assisted in
the creation of the park two decades earlier (the Fort Davis Historical Society).
Unfortunately, as Doug McChristian would recall in 1994, the society "had become more
social than advocates for Fort Davis." The group was aging, and few younger people
joined. Thus McChristian decided in 1983 to create a new entity, the "Friends of Fort
Davis." Their first task, the superintendent determined, would be to seek private funds
to restore HB-21, the barracks building to the north of the museum/visitors center.
McChristian had an estimate made in October 1982 of the cost of restoration ($176,000)
and refurnishing ($30,000-40,000). He predicted that such an endeavor would rank low
in priority with the NPS, but that a private campaign would "allow the people of West
Texas and other interested parties a chance to have a personal hand in developing Fort
Davis." McChristian further predicted in January 1983 that such a foundation "could
very well turn into a long-term association that could provide financial support for a
variety of activities at the Site, particularly by providing financial aid to continue living
history programs here."\(^{17}\)

The irony of McChristian's decision was that the quest for private funding of a
public historic site energized the park in ways not seen since the early 1960s. By
selecting the enlisted men's barracks as the target of rehabilitation, and by embracing
the story of black troopers as never before, Fort Davis once again gained national attention
for its innovative ideas and methods of interpretation. This in turn contributed to new
monies (both public and private) for restoration and maintenance; all to be linked to the
tradition of park service standards and procedures for hiring, design and construction,
and visitor services. The synergy of staff commitment, funding, scholarly attention, and

\(^{16}\)Memorandum of Sutton to Roger Waters, EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) Counselor, SWR,

\(^{17}\)Doug McChristian interview, October 5, 1994; Memorandum of Superintendent, FODA, to the SWR
Director, January 6, 1983, FODA Reading Files.
Figure 43. Restored Enlisted Men’s Barracks (Late 1980s). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 44. Interior of Restored Enlisted Men’s Barracks. Courtesy Fort Davis NHS, late 1980
visitors' patronage, joined to give the park a new lease on life and validate the efforts of the park planners to make Fort Davis a showcase of western military history.

The first step in moving the park towards McChristian's goal was selection of members of the "Friends" group. The superintendent realized that he needed a mixture of local activists and nationally prominent figures to lend legitimacy and lustre to the pursuits of the board. Local residents who accepted McChristian's offer of membership were rancher Pansy Espy, descendant of one of the first ranching families in the Davis Mountains (who also agreed to serve as treasurer); Donna Smith of Ft. Davis; Thomas Bruner of Midland, vice president and trust officer of that community's Texas American Bank; and Bob Dillard, editor of the Alpine Avalanche and the first president of the board. Joining them from other parts of the country were Dr. John Langellier, curator of the Army Museum at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Sara D. Jackson, employee of the National Historic Preservation and Records Commission in Washington (a branch of the National Archives and Records Administration [NARA]); William Leckie, professor of history at the University of Toledo and the author of Buffalo Soldiers; and Robert Utley, now a free-lance writer of historical works living in Santa Fe with his wife, Southwest Region chief historian Melody Webb. Superintendent McChristian informed each board member from out of town that they should expect to meet at least once per year in Fort Davis, and that they would be asked to identify pertinent funding sources for a $250,000 restoration and refurnishing project. An example of the scope of the work expected from the board came in McChristian's letter to Thomas Bruner, wherein he informed the Midland banker that the barracks project had been part of the original master plan, drafted 20 years earlier. He also told Bruner that "quite honestly, Fort Davis offers the only opportunity for the black Regulars to be represented in the National Park System." Other frontier posts were preserved within the NPS, but McChristian made clear that the racial character of military service at Fort Davis would be central to any proposal to private funding agencies. 18

Before the board came to Fort Davis for their first gathering, the superintendent asked the Denver Service Center to review the original plans for barracks restoration. A DSC staff member came to the post on June 9, 1983, and offered both technical advice and guidance on fundraising. In a letter to the board members soon thereafter, McChristian said that "by using private funds [the NPS] can drastically reduce the usual amount of overhead and can reduce the amount even further depending on how much of the preparatory work we might accomplish with the park maintenance staff, day labor, volunteers, and by contribution." Thus the 1978 estimate that restoration would require $176,900 (without furnishings) "may come out closer to $100,000." McChristian himself calculated the furnishing budget to be some $25,000, and had initiated conversations with donors and replica manufacturers to receive special gifts and rates because of the nature of the barracks project. The superintendent wanted the board to meet as soon as possible, perhaps during the September meeting at Fort Davis of the Order of the Indian

18McChristian to Utley, May 3, 1983; McChristian to Thomas M. Bruner, Executive Vice President & Trust Officer, Midland, TX, May 19, 1983, FODA Reading Files; "Fort organizes to restore barracks," Alpine Avalanche, October 6, 1983..
Wars, to which several board members belonged. Among his reasons for the accelerated pace of work were the need to establish tax-exempt status, to plan strategy, and to avoid the inevitable delays (which McChristian called the "ever-present red tape") connected to "complex government accounting procedures."  

To further the efforts of the Friends board, McChristian and the park staff in the spring and summer of 1983 pursued other avenues of support for the historical mission of Fort Davis. Most prominent among these was the release of a contract for $392,000 to Roof Builders, Inc., of El Paso to resingle 20 of the historic structures, redeck all porches on Officers Row, and other work on the walkways, landings and porches of the row. This money came from the "Park Rehabilitation and Improvement Program," (PRIP), which also permitted Fort Davis to hire a temporary carpenter to assist the maintenance staff. In the area of historic interpretation, the park installed a new "photo-metal" wayside exhibit at the post chapel to "interpret the multifunctional chapel as well as commemorate the court-martial trial of 2nd Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper." Funds for this activity came from the SPMA. A third area of interest that summer for the staff was planning for a new "park headquarters." They wanted "a more formal reception area," "separate sound-proofed offices for key personnel," "a staff room large enough to accommodate meetings and training activities," "a larger and more isolated library," "a separate, yet convenient, room for xeroxing and office supplies," and "an office for the maintenance foreman." Finally, the park began to address the backlog of unaccessioned artifacts, which would increase dramatically once excavation began on the barracks, by hiring as a museum technician Judith M. Hitzman, most recently a staff member of the NPS' Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site in Montana. McChristian directed Hitzman to bring order to the cataloguing process, and to train cooperative education students for collections work, as well as to instruct volunteers in "historic housekeeping techniques."  

When the Friends group assembled at the park on September 14, 1983, they faced both a challenge and an opportunity. In order to commence their own task of fundraising, the board needed specifications and plans drawn by the Denver Service Center, and quickly. Unfortunately, the park could commit no funds to this endeavor. Thus Superintendent McChristian suggested that they raise the sum of $10,000 immediately to pay the DSC to send staff to Fort Davis and prepare the planning documents. The board authorized the solicitation of memberships (at $2 per year or $25 for life members), while the staff placed a donation box in the visitors center. By year's end the Friends had collected some $4,000 toward the DSC planning. McChristian asked his staff to conduct as much maintenance work at the barracks as possible to reduce the length of time and the amount of money needed to begin rehabilitation. The most critical feature of the early phase of barracks work, however, was the use of an archeological

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19McChristian to "Dear [Friends of Fort Davis] Board Member," June 10, 1983, FODA Reading Files.

consultant to identify the existing historic resources. The DSC had no one available at short notice to send to Fort Davis, but suggested that McChristian seek a contractor to perform the survey work. Fortunately there resided in the town of Fort Davis a married couple, Ellen and Dr. J. Charles Kelley, who had moved to the Davis Mountains after retiring from Southern Illinois University (she as curator of collections for the university museum for 23 years; he as a professor of archeology for 25 years). Each summer the Kelleys had maintained a home in the Davis Mountains, and conducted archeological digs in the Big Bend area and in Mexico. By agreeing to oversee the survey without compensation, and by utilizing a team of volunteers "Junior Historians" from Alpine High School, the Kelleys managed to complete the digging within the space of three months in the winter and spring of 1984, saving the Friends and the park some $20,000 in the process.21

Whether it was by coincidence or by design, the escalating pace of work at Fort Davis, especially its emphasis on the story of the black soldier, brought to the park in November 1983 William "Bill" Gwaltney as park technician (with primary duties as a ranger and law enforcement officer). Gwaltney was one of the few black NPS employees with an interest in the history of the West; a circumstance that he attributed in a 1994 interview to his family’s heritage of service in the armed forces (including a grandfather who had been one of the famed "Buffalo Soldiers" of the late nineteenth-century). Gwaltney would spend three years at Fort Davis, in which time the park generated much information and publicity about the place of black troopers in the service of their country. When he first arrived in Fort Davis, Gwaltney soon recognized both the "invisibility" of the black soldier in the minds of community members, as well as the ambivalence of the staff towards interpreting the black experience with white personnel. Gwaltney decided to "normalize the dialogue" about black soldiers, realizing that to most visitors the park symbolized what he called "Texas nationalism" rather than the competing forces of discrimination and opportunity that military service implied.22

Throughout the spring and summer of 1984, the Fort Davis team of Bill Gwaltney, Mary Williams, Doug McChristian, and supervisory ranger John Sutton addressed all manner of historical and cultural issues at the park. The superintendent prepared a furnishings plan for the barracks, and coordinated the fundraising strategies of the Friends board. McChristian also learned of new initiatives in documentary filmmaking about the Buffalo Soldiers, especially one promoted by WHNM, the public television station of predominantly black Howard University in Washington, D.C.


The park wished to update its 1960s-vintage orientation film to reflect the sensibilities of the civil rights era, and WHNM's "The Different Drummer" seemed a logical choice to replace the existing video. Mary Williams continued to research and develop women's history activities for the park, and Bill Gwaltney approached a series of scholarly and popular journals and magazines to interest them in the black soldier story. Gwaltney and McChristian also corresponded with other NPS sites with black history themes to encourage them to incorporate western history in their slide shows and displays on black America.²³

²³McChristian to Arnold Wallace, General Manager, WHNM Television, Howard University, Washington, DC, April 6, 1984; McChristian to the Special Programs Director, The National Black Programming Consortium, Columbus, OH, May 2, 1984; McChristian to the Special Programs Director, WNET, New York, NY, May 2, 1984; McChristian to Sharon A. Brown, Editor, "Gone West" Magazine,
These initiatives led McChristian, Gwaltney and the Friends group to focus more closely on promotion of the black perspective on Fort Davis history in their applications to private funding agencies for the barracks restoration project. The most noteworthy of these efforts came with the Meadows Foundation of Dallas. Pansy Espy remembered how the Friends sat down with directories of philanthropic organizations nationwide, and members Bob Dillard, Tom Bruner, and herself wrote over 130 applications. The Meadows Foundation, created in 1948 by Algur H. Meadows, the founder of the General American Oil Company of Texas, had never worked before with a federal agency on a grant proposal, but they found fascinating the strength of the black heritage at Fort Davis. McChristian, Gwaltney, and Sara Jackson of the National Archives thus travelled to Dallas in July 1984 to plead their case to the Meadows board, asking for $50,000 to defray the expenses of the barracks restoration. The seriousness of the Friends’ message, and the reputation of their board nationally, led the Meadows Foundation to grant their request in October of that year. The $50,000, plus some $10,500 raised that summer by the Friends at the park, helped attract other monies as well: $3,000 from the Burkitt Foundation, $2,500 from donations at the visitors center, and $35,000 in "in-kind" (non-cash) services provided by the Southwest Region’s "Cultural Resources Preservation Crew." One distinctive feature of fundraising was the institution of the Labor Day weekend "Barracks Restoration Festival," which in 1984 contributed $6,000 to the private donations to the project. Overall, by January 1985, Superintendent McChristian could claim that the Friends had raised $101,000 (the total cost of barracks restoration), with the furnishings plan next for the Friends to consider.\(^\text{24}\)

While it would have been tempting to focus all of the park’s energies on the barracks restoration project, Superintendent McChristian also faced issues of management that were no less crucial to the success of his staff. Early in 1984, the superintendent asked the Southwest Region to assist him in securing funding for an historic base map and "General Management Plan/Development Concept Plan [GMP/DCP]." This latter request emanated from news that the Denver Service Center had prepared "Historic Preservation Guides" for the park that McChristian believed could serve as "the foundation of a Maintenance Management Program," which in turn would "better enable management to plan and program cyclic maintenance needs." The superintendent continued to monitor claims that Holloman AFB wished to increase its supersonic flights over the Valentine area. McChristian reported to his superiors in Santa Fe that "the environmental impact statement issued by the Air Force was hotly contested by local groups, particularly the Council for the Preservation of the Last Frontier."

\(^{24}\)Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1984; Doug McChristian interview, October 5, 1984; Pansy Espy interview, January 5, 1995; "Fort Davis to receive grant," San Angelo Standard, October 1, 1984; McChristian to General The Meadows Foundation, Dallas, TX, October 2, 1984; McChristian to James H. Lazine, Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Association, Fort Worth, TX, April 26, 1984; McChristian to Dr. John Ben Shepperd, Odessa, TX, August 6, 1984, FODA Reading Files.
Encroachments upon the air space of the park were matched by fears that Mrs. J.A. Hanchey of Lake Charles, Louisiana, would sell her tract of land adjacent to the site’s south boundary, near the base of Sleeping Lion Mountain. McChristian noted that "various superintendents, past and present, have expressed concern over the development potential of this tract." The property, less than five acres in all, "lies only a few yards from the parking lot and within a few feet of the site of the Post Trader’s Store," "virtually on the front doorstep of the Site." McChristian entered into conversations with Mrs. Hanchey, whom he reported "concurs completely with management’s concerns and said that she would be more than happy to work with the Service in any way to see the boundary protected."  

These latter two issues dramatized the realities of management at Fort Davis, especially its inability to halt the intrusions of the military or the private sector because of the limited financial resources of the NPS, and the power of the armed forces in the years of the Reagan-era defense buildup. In early 1985, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) announced that it would, at the insistence of U.S. Representative Ronald Coleman, an El Paso Democrat, and U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman, a New Mexico Democrat, investigate the report that the environmental impact statement released by Holloman AFB would include as many as 750 sonic booms per month over the Davis Mountains. New Mexicans were outraged that the Air Force also had targeted the Gila Wilderness area known as the "Reserve MOA [Military Operations Area]," and that both the Valentine MOA and Reserve would undergo an increase of overflights of 1,000 percent (or 14,000 flights per year). The level of protest did halt the overflight expansion, but the Air Force’s insistence that it needed ever more open space for testing rankled Superintendent McChristian, much as it did his colleague at White Sands National Monument, Donald Harper, who had the air base as a neighbor in the Tularosa basin of southern New Mexico.  

At the close of his fourth year of service as Fort Davis’ superintendent, Doug McChristian had much to consider when the NPS asked him to comment upon the topic: "Where the National Park Service is Going." Buoyed by his experiences with private fundraising, yet burdened by limited operating budgets, McChristian wrote in November 1984: "I cannot escape the feeling that the Park Service is losing something, a spark or optimism that it once had." This McChristian blamed on the NPS’ "becoming increasingly pre-occupied with things like regulatory compliance, ‘special emphasis’ programs, needless paperwork, and personnel problems." While this could be nothing more than "an inescapable syndrome inherent with being a Federal agency," yet

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25Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1984; Memorandum of McChristian to the SWR Director, January 18, 1984; Memorandum of McChristian to the Superintendent, San Antonio Missions NHP, November 1, 1984, FODA Reading Files.

McChristian hoped that the NPS "and its people" could be "reoriented, redirected to the traditions upon which the Park Service is founded - resources and visitors." The 15-year veteran of NPS employment conceded that "the agency must grow with and adapt to a changing and increasingly complex world." Nonetheless, said McChristian, "we should make every effort to hold fast to our principles," which he defined as "the dedication, attitudes, and ability of our employees." McChristian worried particularly about the impact of the expanded paperwork on small parks like Fort Davis, and the need for "greater understanding and cooperation between central office staff and field personnel." The superintendent had "worked on both sides of the fence," and had concluded about the regional office: "I know how they can hinder our ability to get the job done."^27

The Southwest Region of the NPS had to recognize the sincerity of McChristian's words, given the success of his park in raising funds for the barracks restoration. Thus deputy regional director Donald Dayton, himself a former superintendent at parks like White Sands and Carlsbad Caverns, cited Fort Davis in January 1985 as "one of the few consistently well run parks in the Region." "Such compliments don't come down the line very often," McChristian told his staff, and he thanked them for their contributions to the park's recognition. "The credit for this," said the Fort Davis superintendent, "falls to each and everyone of you for doing your utmost in the big things as well as the countless details you may feel go unnoticed and unappreciated." McChristian long had felt that Fort Davis was "an above average operation," and the staff needed to know the thoughts of the regional office as it moved towards the second half of the 1980s.^28

On January 13, 1985, Fort Davis hosted the groundbreaking ceremonies for the barracks restoration project. While donations for rehabilitation had come rather easily, support from the private sector for the furnishings lagged. At this juncture, Bill Gwaltney began another letter-writing campaign to increase awareness in the story of Fort Davis, developing a host of imaginative ventures that would earn him accolades within the NPS by the time he left the park the following year. Gwaltney's efforts began in February 1985 when he approached Victor Julian, director of national events for the Anheuser-Busch brewing company of St. Louis. Fort Davis needed "replicas of the furniture, footlockers, and uniform parts of the Indian Wars Period" for the barracks, which he estimated would cost about $30,000. Gwaltney had learned of Anheuser-Busch's interest in "supporting the shooting sports," and he proposed that the brewer "purchase 22 replica springfield carbines ($125 each) of the type used by cavalry troopers." As his incentive for Anheuser-Busch, Gwaltney wrote: "It will come as no surprise to you that one of your company's products, Budweiser beer, was a favorite of frontier soldiers," as "many archeological excavations at Western military posts have uncovered dozens of quart sized Budweiser bottles." Fort Davis itself had in its "study

27Memorandum of McChristian to the Acting SWR Director, November 7, 1984, FODA Reading Files.

28Memorandum of McChristian to All Employees, FODA, January 16, 1985, FODA Reading Files.
Figure 46. Pablo Bencomo (left) receives certificate at retirement dinner (March 1984). At center is Superintendent Doug McChristian; at right standing is SWR Deputy Director Donald Dayton. Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
collection" "two complete 19th century Budweiser bottles," one of which the park hoped to display as part of the barracks project.29

Gwaltney drafted similar letters to many organizations nationwide in search of furnishing monies, and read widely in magazines and newspapers that carried stories about the black military experience. In February 1985, Gwaltney agreed to travel to Odessa to speak to a black church service on the meaning of the black soldier’s life. In like manner, Superintendent McChristian notified Colonel James Revels, U.S.A. (retired), of El Paso that he had read the latter’s article in the El Paso Times entitled, "Buffalo Soldiers Defended Southwest." "Quite honestly," the superintendent informed Revels, "we need assistance in the greater El Paso area as we have no representation there at present." McChristian suggested that "one or a series of news articles would be valuable in drawing public attention to the project." Also solicited by McChristian in El Paso was Keith Kochenour, director of creative services for the Publishers and Advertising Specialists of that city. Kochenour organized the Paso Del Norte Gun Show in April 1985, and Fort Davis had asked for exhibit space there. McChristian wished to draw attention to the barracks refurnishing program at the gun show exhibit, and sent publicity materials to the advertising agent to demonstrate the merits of the Fort Davis request.30

Little else seemed to matter to the Fort Davis staff as the Friends group generated interest and donations to the barracks restoration project. Doug McChristian authorized Mary Williams in June 1985 to travel to Washington for an extended research trip in the military records of the National Archives. Her task was to collect the materials that park historian Ben Levy had not consulted in the mid-1960s, primarily the documentation on the "First Fort [1854-1861]." The superintendent also contacted the nation’s most prominent black publication, Ebony Magazine, that month to submit an article on the Buffalo Soldiers. Revealing the shift from the generic soldier’s story to that of African-Americans, McChristian told Charles Sanders of Ebony that "today Fort Davis National Historic Site is a major facet of Park Service efforts to place black history in [its] proper perspective in the interpretation of American history to the visiting public." In July, Bill Gwaltney corresponded with Bernie Casey, former professional football player for the Los Angeles Rams and one of the officers of the Black Screen Actor’s Guild. Gwaltney hoped that Casey could interest filmmakers in Hollywood in telling the black soldier’s story; a scenario that he also presented to perhaps the most prominent black director and actor of his generation, Sidney Poitier, known for his Oscar-winning

29Gwaltney to Victor Julian, Director, National Events, Anheuser-Busch, Inc., St. Louis, MO, February 1, 1985, FODA Reading Files.

role in *Lilies of the Field* (1963), and his direction and starring role in *Buck and the Preacher* (1972), a black version of the 1950s television series, *Wagon Train.*

These efforts at promotion and publicity for the park and its barracks restoration project met with mixed success in the summer and fall of 1985. Neither Casey nor Poitier demonstrated interest in the queries of McChristian and Gwaltney. In addition, *Ebony Magazine* shocked Gwaltney with their "quite noncommittal and terminal response" to the request for an article about Fort Davis. The park technician felt betrayed somehow by the publication, stating in November that "as a black growing up in Washington, D.C., I enjoyed your magazine not just as a journal of progress in black equality and self awareness, but as an historical record as well." Gwaltney referred to himself as "a black Park Ranger" who believed that "it is critical that the black publishing community (in which your publication plays a major role) open lines of communication with those areas of the National Park Service that deal with black American history." *Ebony* could highlight "an important aspect of American history that has been ignored for many years by race-conscious writers, historians, and movie producers." The Fort Davis story could also correct the assumption "by the press in general, that the ranks of the Park Service and other 'non-traditional' organizations do not contain black individuals." "From entrance station duty to backcountry patrol," said Gwaltney, "and from search and rescue missions to managing National Park Service areas, black park service professionals are involved with the history of the past, the protection of the resources of today and the future of the National Parks." He hoped that Sanders and his magazine would rethink their decision to reject a Fort Davis narrative so that the nation could read of "the proud military tradition of the Buffalo Soldiers," whose "voices are now stilled but their story deserves to be told."

While the rebuff from a national black magazine may have rankled Gwaltney, an incident involving the famed novelist James A. Michener and the black park ranger nearly proved more disastrous for Fort Davis. Michener, known for his massive works on such topics as *Space, Hawaii,* and *Centennial* (the latter a historical treatment of Colorado), had agreed to write a novel entitled, *Texas,* as part of that state's 1986 sesquicentennial. In his inimitable style, the author wished to see as much of the Lone Star state as possible during his research phase. One place that he wished to visit was the Davis Mountains and their NPS park. He accepted the offer of Clayton Williams, a Davis Mountains rancher, cable company owner, and later candidate for governor of Texas (1990), to ride in Williams' helicopter around the Trans-Pecos region. When the party reached Fort Davis, Williams decided to have his pilot land in the parking lot of the federal facility; a violation of codes and of the safety of the visitors. Bill Gwaltney,

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32Gwaltney to Sanders, November 26, 1985, FODA Reading Files.
as the ranger on duty that afternoon, came out to the helicopter, informed a rather irate Williams that he could not permit them to land on park property, and watched as Michener et al., lifted off for their return to Williams' ranch.\footnote{Bill Gwaltney interview, September 15, 1994; Doug McChristian interview, October 5, 1994; McChristian to James A. Michener, c/o Random House, New York, NY, October 9, 1985, FODA Reading Files.}

The Fort Davis staff thought no more of the Michener incident until October 1985, when Random House publishers released the novel in time for the kickoff of the 150th anniversary of the fall of the Alamo. Doug McChristian and his employees were thus shocked to open the book and read in its introduction: "I also had the honor of being thrown out of Fort Davis, a U.S. National Park and perhaps the best of the restored of the Texas forts. Alas, I never saw it." The superintendent considered it "regrettable that such a remark has to mar an otherwise fine work, especially since you made no attempt to describe the circumstances." McChristian then reiterated the incident report filed by Ranger Gwaltney, which clearly articulated NPS policy on unauthorized flight landings on park property. "As an author and historian," said the superintendent, "you can well-imagine how disruptive a low-flying aircraft is to a park visitor on the ground who is trying to immerse himself in the 19th century." In addition, "there is always the potential for malfunction or pilot error." "Damage or destruction of any historic building," McChristian suggested, "would be an irretrievable loss." The superintendent also took exception to "one of your party’s uncomplimentary remarks about the Federal Government." Ranger Gwaltney’s offer to drive Michener from an off-site location to the park was rejected, leading McChristian to conclude: "We feel that your claim that you were ‘thrown out’ of Fort Davis . . . is an exaggeration that is misleading to anyone unfamiliar with the circumstances." He realized that "there is little that might be done at this time to remedy the situation," but hoped that Michener would return so that "it will be our pleasure to provide you with a ‘cook’s tour’ of the Site."\footnote{McChristian to Michener.}

The irony of Michener’s pique at Fort Davis was that the "Texas Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History" had wanted to include information on the park in the Lone Star birthday celebration. Doug McChristian wrote to the association’s president, Melvin Wade, to solicit his support for the barracks restoration project, especially its fundraising campaign for the furnishings. One feature of that campaign was an idea developed by Bill Gwaltney to produce and sell "a Buffalo Soldier Commemorative Revolver." The superintendent believed that, "to our knowledge this is the first such commemorative to honor the black American soldier." Gwaltney had convinced two magazines that appealed to weapons enthusiasts, \textit{Guns and Ammo}, and the \textit{American Rifleman}, to publish articles on the commemorative revolver. Other activities that the park undertook on behalf of the new barracks included acceptance of a $15,000 bust of a Buffalo Soldier by sculptor Eddie Dixon of Lubbock, and receipt of the traveling exhibit "Ebony Odyssey." Put together by the Fort Bliss Museum of El Paso, the exhibit received what McChristian called "many favorable comments," and "served
as a striking and dramatic focal point for visitors as they enter the museum and park visitor center."

Word of the project had reached as far east as New York City, where Robyn Alexander, a teacher at the "General Daniel 'Chappie' James Jr. School," solicited materials on the Buffalo Soldiers. John M. Sutton, acting superintendent of Fort Davis, sent Ms. Alexander's students copies of articles written for Black History month, as well as a bibliography that the park staff used to prepare its interpretation of the black experience.35

For all these activities, park ranger Bill Gwaltney received much praise from his colleagues at Fort Davis, and from his peers in the park service. In May 1985, McChristian nominated Gwaltney for the "Fourth Annual Freeman Tilden Award for Outstanding Contribution to Interpretation." This competition was named for the "father" of park service interpretative programs, who worked in the pre-World War II era. The superintendent, himself an expert in matters of living history, described Gwaltney as "an excellent interpreter," with "a natural ability to communicate effectively with his audience, to alter his presentation to the audience's interest level, and to stimulate conversation with visitors which leads to further theme discussion." Then in December, supervisory ranger John Sutton recommended Gwaltney for the "Southwest Region Special Events Team." This award provided its participants with "additional experience in law enforcement and visitor protection." Gwaltney had "a full law enforcement commission, firefighter 'red card,' current standard first aid and CPR certification," along with "automatic weapons training from Quantico Marine Base," and certification from the National Rifle Association (NRA) as an expert in "rifle, pistol and shotgun." He had taught courses at nearby Sul Ross State University in weapons use, and "in tae-kwon-do Korean martial arts." Gwaltney for his part informed G. Ray Arnett, executive vice-president of the NRA, of his own support of the organization's goals and objectives. "You are no doubt well aware," the ranger told Arnett, "of both the budget cuts affecting the National Park System and the feeling on the part of anti-gunners that the role of firearms in building our country should be minimized or ignored completely." He then used his Freeman Tilden nomination to campaign for the barracks restoration project, specifically the 10th Cavalry revolver sale. "These black soldiers," said Gwaltney, "many of them combat veterans, showed time and again, courage, patriotism and sacrifice in the execution of their duties."36

The intense focus upon the accomplishments of black soldiers, and the role of Fort Davis' first black ranger therein, meant that the park had an opportunity to become


36Memorandum of Sutton to Chief Ranger, Wupatki/Sunset Crater National Monuments, December 27, 1985; Memorandum of Sutton to the Chief, NPS Office of Training, December 12, 1985; Memorandum of McChristian to the SWR Director, May 14, 1985; Gwaltney to G. Ray Arnett, Executive Vice-President, National Rifle Association, Washington, DC, November 19, 1985, FODA Reading Files.
a national center for the promotion of frontier black history. While this would have required a staff and budget far beyond the scope of the NPS, Bill Gwaltney’s endeavors provided a window on the possibilities of the park service as a player in the national dialogue about race and ethnicity. One example of that came in the spring of 1985, when Superintendent McChristian wrote to the mayor of Thomasville, Georgia, M. Tom Faircloth, to support that community’s efforts to convince the U.S. Postal Service to print a commemorative stamp of Henry O. Flipper. Thomasville was Flipper’s hometown, and there the former Fort Davis officer was buried after his death in 1940. McChristian described his park as having the "dubious distinction of being the scene of his 1881 court-martial." McChristian and Mary Williams prepared a lengthy biographical sketch for the Thomasville mayor, as well as for Ray O. MacColl, assistant superintendent of schools for Pelham, Georgia. Speaking in a forthright manner about Flipper and race not seen at Fort Davis since the days of Frank Smith, McChristian characterized the posthumously exonerated black lieutenant as someone who "accomplished what many dared not dream of." Flipper’s attendance at West Point rendered him "the first of his race to pursue careers in fields previously closed to blacks." The engineering graduate, despite his legal problems, in the words of McChristian, "was undoubtedly a pioneer for equal rights in a time when the phrase was uncommon to most Americans." Thus it was no surprise in the summer of 1985 that Fort Davis, along with Sul Ross State University, sponsored a one-act play, "Held in Trust," based upon the life of Henry Flipper. An El Paso actor, Bob Snead, a former Army aviator, portrayed Flipper to audiences in his hometown and around the Southwest, and appeared in Alpine as part of Fort Davis’ second annual barracks restoration festival.37

Fort Davis could not focus solely on a high level of historical promotion, as the park had standing obligations of maintenance and service, as well as responding to research inquiries about a wide range of historical phenomena. Mary Williams continued to develop her programs on women and the frontier military, with the NPS sponsoring Women’s History Week in early March. While not as high in profile as Black History Month, women’s stories had finally gained some recognition within the male-dominated park service. Superintendent McChristian asked the "Federal Women’s Coordinator" for the Southwest Region to indicate "how many other areas . . . recognized Women’s History Week." Another indicator of changes in gender roles in the NPS was the invitation extended in April to Sandra Myres, professor of history at the University of Texas at Arlington, to speak to the Indian Wars’ training program to be held at Fort Davis. Bob Utley was also asked to appear in the Memorial Day weekend activity, addressing the topic: "Popular attitudes towards western expansion." Myres, a specialist in the history of the Spanish Southwest who had moved in the early 1980s into the story of women in the region, was asked to speak on "women’s attitudes towards life at a

frontier military post." John Sutton suggested that Myres explore "such subthemes as women's expectations of frontier life during the last half of the 19th century, women's attitudes towards raising a family at a frontier military post, and the differences and similarities of the frontier army family in relation with the remainder of 19th century American society."38

Gender and service to the park also surfaced in the area of volunteerism; a dimension of interpretation that would become all the more critical as the barracks restoration project moved to closure. A group of local women, including Fort Davis' Mary Williams, organized the "Davis Mountains Quilters' Guild" in 1985 to make quilts for the barracks. Original planning for the refurnishing of the facility identified the need for seven quilts, and research revealed that "the use of quilts appears to be characteristic to black enlisted men." The quilters donated coverings to be auctioned as part of the refurnishing fund, which by early 1986 had reached $15,000 (or half of the target of $30,000). Ranger Williams, the mother of an adolescent daughter, also realized that the Girl Scouts could provide services as volunteers that equalled those of the Boy Scouts. The Department of the Interior had entered into a "Memorandum of Understanding [MOU]" with the Boy Scouts, which Williams believed should be extended to young girls so that the "work the girl scouts are doing in the parks will received official recognition." Williams saw their contribution as essential to the success of a park like Fort Davis, which had a small volunteer base and needed all the help that it could command. She went so far in the fall of 1986 to inform the Southwest Region's VIP coordinator that the program needed significant reforms. Her own successful VIP program included a newsletter, but would benefit from more formal gestures of recognition: an appreciation luncheon, awards, on-site housing or camping facilities, and extended training and mentoring. "From personal observation," said Williams, "it is better not to have a volunteer program than to have a poor one." She wondered if all parks in the region shared Fort Davis' commitment to the support of volunteers, and she reminded her superiors in Santa Fe: "To help parks realize successful volunteer programs, the lines of communications between parks, regions, and Washington need to be expanded."39

The role of the Friends' group in expanding the interpretive programs of Fort Davis also concerned Superintendent McChristian in the winter and spring of 1986, as the barracks awaited the last of their furnishings. He faced continued reductions in funding from the NPS, but "with the end of the barracks restoration in sight, the [Friends'] group is enthusiastic about pursuing future projects." This eagerness, and proven ability at fundraising, confronted the superintendent with an historical dilemma:

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38"Women's History Week set," Marfa Independent/Big Bend Sentinel, February 27, 1986; Memorandum of McChristian to SWR Federal Women's Coordinator, April 2, 1986; Sutton to Utley, April 2, 1986; Sutton to Sandra Myres, University of Texas at Arlington, April 2, 1986, FODA Reading Files.

39"Davis Mountain Quilters' Guild donates quilt to fort," Marfa Independent/Big Bend Sentinel, January 9, 1986; Memorandum of Williams to the SWR Director, April 30, 1986; Memorandum of Williams to the SWR Director, Attn: VIP Coordinator, September 10, 1985, FODA Reading Files.
the lack of a master plan to guide the staff and Friends. "Management needs a
document," said McChristian, "either outlining development plans, or one clearly
defining the logic for not continuing restoration." Another feature in need of clarification
was "the proposed switch of the museum and administrative areas at park headquarters."
What McChristian could discuss with the Friends was a plan to restore and refurbish the
post hospital. The Friends, McChristian remembered eight years after leaving Fort
Davis for the second time, had first expressed interest in the rehabilitation of the chapel.
"Fort Davis is a very religious area," said McChristian, where the community's many
uses of the facility rendered the chapel "a social and religious center." In shifting their
attention to the hospital, the superintendent told the Southwest Region that the building
"represents perhaps the best extant example of a frontier U.S. army hospital in the
Southwestern United States." Despite the modest efforts to provide access to the
hospital, "the building evokes a great deal of visitor interest and curiosity about medical
facilities and practices of the late 19th century." McChristian drafted a plan that received
little support to spend $450,000 to prepare the facility for visitation of some 75,000 per
year. "Since virtually everyone can relate to illness and contemporary medical science,"
said the superintendent, the park could reach visitors in new ways by explaining such
topics as "medical personnel and their duties, routine hospital operations, 19th century
diseases and treatments, the hospital's role as an entity of the fort, relations with the
civilian community, and the contributions of frontier army surgeons to medical and
natural science."

The seriousness of the interpretive program needs at Fort Davis had their more
wistful counterpart in the 1986 sesquicentennial of Texas. Ironically, the major push to
highlight the distinctiveness of the Lone Star state ran into trouble just as the year began.
In January 1986, Texas' central economic feature, oil production, collapsed in value as
the consortium known as the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) reduced
prices in the space of 60 days from nearly $30 per barrel to less than ten dollars. This
downward spiral in earnings and tax revenue caught Texas and the nation by surprise,
with the former suffering both economic and psychological trauma for years. The lack
of funds, as well as state pride, rendered the ambitions of the sesquicentennial moot, and
Fort Davis thus had few requests from Texas officials to conduct joint programs 150
years after the fall of the Alamo. In fact, the only venues of note that engaged the staff's
time were the plans of Bob Reinhadt, whom Superintendent McChristian described as the
only member of the local sesquicentennial committee, to "create a self-guided auto tour
of the old El Paso stage route through Fort Davis," and the inquiry of William Sandidge
of San Antonio to retrace the journey of the 1850s camel trains of the U.S. Army. The
superintendent conceded that this could "undoubtedly rank among the most unusual
during the Sesquicentennial." Unfortunately, Fort Davis believed that "keeping live
animals here in permanent exhibit would be neither economically feasible nor necessary
from an interpretive standpoint." Sandidge persisted with his plans to raise some

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40 Memorandum of McChristian to the Acting SWR Director, May 27, 1986; Memorandum of
McChristian to SWR Director, January 14, 1986, FODA Reading Files; Doug McChristian interview,
October 5, 1994.
$30,000 to send the camels through the Davis Mountains, but Fort Davis could not agree to provide monies to pay for one animal on the route.\textsuperscript{41}

In May 1986, Doug McChristian decided to accept reassignment to Hubbell Trading Post in northeastern Arizona as superintendent. He recounted for the \textit{Alpine Avalanche} the changes that the Texas park had undergone since his return in 1980. McChristian was most proud of the formation of the Friends group, which triggered more interest in the upkeep of the physical plant of Fort Davis. The park also had prepared its first vegetation plan, a historic scene management plan, and had begun the process to acquire a general management plan. An initial archeological survey resulted in an historic base map consisting of 223 identified historic structures, including some 70 sites "previously unknown or not located." The Southwest Region sent in McChristian's place Steve Miller, most recently the superintendent of Arizona's Navajo National Monument. The New York state native had spent five years at the isolated park on the Navajo reservation, and the previous five and one-half years at western New Mexico's El Morro National Monument. Miller described himself to the \textit{Alpine Avalanche} as a "Civil War buff," and indicated that he, his wife Char, and their two daughters looked forward to the transfer to the west Texas mountains.\textsuperscript{42}

The Steve Miller era at Fort Davis was marked by a stream of awards and plaudits for the commitment of the staff in the 1980s to emphasize the complexity and richness of the park's history. Much of this recognition belonged to the departed superintendent Doug McChristian, whose belief in the efficacy of living history and his skills at organization made Fort Davis a better institution. For the next two years (1986-1988), park staff and management participated in celebrations and historical programs that showed the wisdom of McChristian's leadership. From the 25th anniversary of the park's creation (September 1986), to the long-delayed dedication of the enlisted men's barracks in February 1988, public attention focused on the park in ways not seen since the star-studded ceremonies of 1966. In addition, park staff received publicity for their contributions to history and the NPS, both individually and collectively.

Whenever a new superintendent arrives in a park, there is a period of assessment and contemplation prior to the implementation of distinctive plans and projects. For Steve Miller, so much work was in motion that he would oversee its completion before he could put forth his own concepts and designs. Ongoing in the summer of 1986 was Jerome Greene's historic structures report, as well as the final initiative to fund the refurnishing of the barracks. The park maintenance staff also built and installed five new exhibits in the post commissary building, and displayed three artillery pieces in the barracks wing: a gatling gun, mountain howitzer, and ordnance rifle. The maintenance

\textsuperscript{41}Fort Davis Staff Meeting Minutes, September 25, 1985, March 3, 1986; McChristian to William Sandidge, Texas Camel Revival, San Antonio, TX, September 12, 1985, February 11, 1986, FODA Reading Files.

workers also adapted the grounds to accommodate handicapped visitors. Central to these successful programs was the work of students from Sul Ross State University, who benefitted from the Cooperative Education Program agreement that Fort Davis had signed in the early 1970s with the college. Steve Miller arrived at his new post only to learn that the state of Texas contemplated closing the Alpine campus, or merging its services with other institutions of higher learning. The superintendent thus asked his staff to conduct an inventory of the working relationship between the park and Sul Ross. They itemized all manner of reciprocal services, from museum training courses to graduate research in history and ecology to employment of some twenty students at the park. Among these were eight women and seven Hispanic students; numbers that indicated Fort Davis' sincerity in meeting federal goals of equality in hiring and training.

The fulltime staff at Fort Davis were also recognized for their expertise and commitment to history by a variety of organizations in the region. Supervisory park ranger John Sutton was invited to join the groundbreaking ceremonies of historic structure rehabilitation at Fort Stockton. The Annie Riggs museum had learned of the successes of Fort Davis in a similar endeavor, and asked Sutton to speak to an audience of 75 persons about "soldier life and cavalry field service." Then in November 1986, Sutton traveled to the San Antonio Missions National Historic Park to supervise rehearsals of their living history drama, "The Immortal 32." Bill Gwaltney provided similar services in June 1986 when the Center for the Study of African and Afro-American Life at the University of Texas invited the Fort Davis ranger to participate in its "Juneteenth" celebration. Designed to mark the date in 1865 when slaves learned that the South had surrendered in the Civil War, Juneteenth (so named for the pronunciation of the date of June 19th by the slaves) became in the 1980s a major historical event for blacks in the West and Southwest. Gwaltney delivered public lectures to school groups on the Buffalo Soldiers, appeared on local Austin television, and conducted a slide show for dignitaries gathered in the state capitol (among whom was Texas native and famed civil rights leader Dr. James Farmer). The Fort Davis ranger then graced the pages of the Austin American-Statesman as it covered the Juneteenth festivities, attended by some 6,000 guests. Upon his return to Fort Davis, Gwaltney, who by then had applied for a transfer to Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site in La Junta, Colorado, reported to Superintendent Miller that "appropriate programs [like Juneteenth] can help to educate the public, stimulate interest in the site and provide publicity for the interpretative mission of the National Park Service."44

43Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986; Stephen T. Miller, FODA Superintendent, to Victor Morrow, Office of the President, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, TX, June 26, 1986; Miller to Larry E. Temple, Chairman, Governor's Select Committee on Higher Education, Austin, TX, July 16, 1986, FODA Reading Files.

44Memorandum of Sutton to FODA Superintendent, July 7, 1986; Memorandum of Sutton to Superintendent, San Antonio Missions National Historic Park, December 17, 1986; Memorandum of Gwaltney to FODA Superintendent, July 9, 1986, FODA Reading Files; "Juneteenth grows from 'little day' of fun in 1920s," Austin (TX) American-Statesman, June 20, 1986; "Gwaltney Going to Bent's Fort," Jeff Davis County News, July 24, 1986.
Fort Davis' own history received much attention in the fall of 1986, as Steve Miller and the staff coordinated the 25th anniversary of the signing of the enabling legislation by President John F. Kennedy. The park wanted to recapture some of the lustre of the 1966 dedication, and invited individuals like Lady Bird Johnson, now living in Austin. On September 7, some 400 people gathered on the parade ground to witness the silver anniversary celebration, listening to speeches from Martin Merrill, who had testified before Congress on behalf of the park; Donald Dayton, deputy Southwest Region director; and Bob Crisman, chief ranger at Fort Davis in the late 1960s. This event came one week after the Friends Festival on Labor Day weekend, which raised some $4,000 for the barracks furnishing project. Superintendent Miller reported to the region that Fort Davis stood within $17,000 of ending the fundraising campaign, and that the latest Friends event was the most popular ever, with its "antique auction, historic weapons demonstrations, women's fashion review of the 1880s, old-fashioned children's games, wagon rides, barbecue, concert by the 62nd Army Band and a baseball game using 1884 rules."45

Figure 47. Superintendent Steve Miller speaking at Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Dedication Ceremony (September 1986). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.

45Miller to Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson, Austin, August 20, 1986; "Fort to celebrate 25th anniversary this Sunday," The Marfa Independent and the Big Bend Sentinel, September 4, 1986; "Fort Celebrated Founding," Jeff Davis County News, September 11, 1986; Memorandum of Miller to Public Affairs Office, SWR, September 26, 1986, FODA Reading Files; Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986.
Staff work to guarantee such successful activities as the Friends festival and the silver anniversary earned deserved respect from the NPS' support agency, the SPMA. Mary Williams received that organization's "Superior Performance Award," the first such designation in its history. SPMA executive director Timothy J. Priehs announced on November 7, 1986, that the long-time Fort Davis employee stood out among all NPS personnel in the region's nearly 50 units for her "outstanding contribution to the programs and operations of SPMA . . . and for tireless dedication to the Association's purpose, helping to ensure the preservation of the National Park System." In the previous five years, Fort Davis' SPMA sales had increased some 200 percent, the proceeds of which could be applied to refurnishing purchases, or Mary Williams' travel to Washington that summer to conduct research in the National Archives. "Without organizations like SPMA," said Miller, "I don't know how we would do those extra special things that really put the polish on." One example was the private agency's donation every year of $500 for discretionary park spending that could not be absorbed by federal appropriations. Mary Williams had used the 1986 allocation for such items as "a Christmas tree and historical Christmas decorations for the CO's quarters, a copy of the 1884 baseball rules, library books, subscriptions to scholarly journals, special awards for volunteers, and the reception for the 25th anniversary celebration of the signing of legislation which created Fort Davis NHS."46

In order to ensure the success of the historic programs of Fort Davis, Superintendent Miller and the staff spent the winter of 1986-1987 coordinating more events and activities linked to the story of the frontier military. Miller agreed to join the Big Bend Area Travel Association, which discussed at its October meeting in Fort Stockton a relationship with the sesquicentennial-inspired "Discover Texas Association." Jay Van Orden of the Arizona Pioneer's Historical Society inquired about bringing a group of society members to Fort Davis for a cavalry encampment. The park staff learned in March 1987 that the National Trust for Historic Preservation had decided to include Fort Davis in its traveling exhibition, "America's Uncommon Places." Perhaps the most interesting program accommodated by Fort Davis personnel was the appearance in July by the Tucson-based "Vision Quest" program. Nationally famous for its rigorous outdoor activities for at-risk youth, Vision Quest asked the park if they could bring a wagon train of young black teenagers to teach them the life of the Buffalo Soldiers. By recapturing the experiences of their western ancestors, the black youth might learn the habits of the soldiers that Fort Davis interpreters had worked so diligently in the 1980s to represent to the American people. The attention that the Tucson-based youth program would bring to the park also could help Fort Davis fulfill its own "quest" for financial

46"Williams Wins Superior Performance Award," Jeff Davis County News, November 13, 1986; Williams to T.J. Priehs, Executive Director, SPMA, November 14, 1986, FODA Reading Files.
support, even though the response of the Vision Quest participants themselves to the outdoor exercises was less than successful.\(^{47}\)

All of these activities in the decade of the 1980s provided Fort Davis with much momentum for the Southwest Region's inaugural competition for the "Garrison Gold Award." The prize received its name from the longtime superintendent of Big Bend National Park, Lemuel "Lon" Garrison, characterized by Regional Director John Cook as someone "who over his forty year career played an important role in defining the role of NPS professionals today." Parks throughout the Southwest were asked to inventory their visitor services programs when they applied for the competition, and Fort Davis believed that it met all criteria established by the regional office in Santa Fe. "Our interpretive program," wrote Steve Miller in the Fort Davis proposal, "is geared towards diversity in the communication of the park's primary themes." Not only did the visitor experience the life of the nineteenth-century soldier; he or she would learn "of the obstacles these black men overcame during their service on the frontier," as well as the Grierson family's "domestic activities, family problems and attitudes towards life on the frontier." Miller was especially proud of his staff's "extra effort to reach children," which included an exhibit on children's lives at the fort that used "historic photographs, copies of school assignments, and a hands-on display of toys." One highlight of this initiative was "a resurrection of a historic [Christmas] tradition, as a volunteer dressed as Santa Claus arrived at a local elementary school aboard a 'sleigh' consisting of an army wagon and a team of mules." Park staff also pursued historical projects not often undertaken by their peers in the region, especially Mary Williams' acceptance of the duty to write an administrative history of Fort Davis, museum technician Judy Hitzman's selection to "help teach a history classification cataloguing session at a curatorial update workshop at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Park," and John Sutton's work at the NPS' "Historic Weapons Certification course at Mather Training Center."\(^{48}\)

What separated the Fort Davis application from its peers was the successful planning for the barracks dedication, which occurred on February 20, 1988. Starting the previous June, the park staff wrote to Friends, volunteers, media, and prominent black personalities to interest them in the ceremony, which would coincide with Black History Month. Among the dignitaries identified by the staff were relatives of 9th and 10th Cavalry troopers, representatives of the Black Cavalry Association, President Ronald Reagan, his Interior secretary, and the NPS director. Superintendent Miller suggested also that the park invite Bryant Gumbel, the black co-host of the NBC Today Show, to broadcast from the park on Friday, February 19. One keynote speaker would be Lieutenant General Emmitt Paige, the highest ranking black Army officer and also the

\(^{47}\) Memorandum of Sutton to the FODA Superintendent, October 31, 1986; Sutton to Jay Van Orden, Arizona Pioneer's Historical Society, Tucson, November 12, 1986; Miller to Clark J. Strickland, Regional Director, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Denver, March 18, 1987; Sutton to Robert "Nobby" Evenhus, Vision Quest, Tucson, June 1, 24, 1987, FODA Reading Files.

\(^{48}\) Memorandum of Miller to the SWR Director, September 16, 1987; Press Release, "Fort Davis National Historic Site, Best in the Southwest," February 20, 1988, FODA Reading Files.
Figure 48. Tom Brown (left) and George Grubb (right) performing in 1880s-era baseball game (c. 1988). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
first black General Officer in the U.S Signal Corps, who would address "The Black Military Tradition in the United States Army." A second would be Dr. William Leckie, honored for his pioneering work with the history of the Buffalo Soldiers. The third, and most familiar to the average visitor, was Alex Haley, author of two prominent works on the black experience: The Autobiography of Malcolm X, and Roots, the former a "bible" of black studies courses nationwide, and the latter a blockbuster novel of Haley's search for his family's heritage in the American South and in Africa. Haley, himself a veteran of military service in the Navy, would speak on the topic, "The Role of Black Americans in the Settling of the West."^49

While Superintendent Miller and his staff anticipated much attention for the success of the barracks restoration and furnishing projects, they were equally thrilled at the announcement by Southwest Regional Director John E. Cook that the park had won the first Garrison Gold award. Cook highlighted Fort Davis' "series of superior living history programs which not only involved Park visitors but spread into the surrounding communities as well." Cook considered the park's research as "well grounded," as it "covered a variety of topics in many different types of media." Volunteer participation at Fort Davis was most praiseworthy, and "to round out a quality visitor experience, resource management and maintenance activities both struck a good balance between effectiveness and efficiency." Cook then praised the park staff for having "demonstrated innovation and balance in creating a very special park visit." The director also announced that Fort Davis would receive for its accomplishments "a one time increase of $2,000 in the park's budget to further expand visitor services," and "a Pueblo storyteller figure by prominent potter Marie Romero of Jemez Pueblo." The regional office had decided to award a storyteller "because it typified both the Southwest and the primary storytelling purpose of all National Park Service sites." Fort Davis would also have its name inscribed on a plaque in the regional headquarters in Santa Fe, where a larger storyteller figure would herald the place of interpretation in the Southwest's parks and monuments.\(^50\)

Fort Davis had more than visitors services to claim as significant in the annual report filed by Steve Miller in April 1988. Maintenance foreman Dale Scheier implemented the NPS' new "Maintenance Management" program to allow the work crew to track needed repair and replacement duties. In an interview eight years later, Scheier (then Chief of Maintenance at Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota) recalled how he introduced techniques of recording all repair and replacement work conducted on the historic structures. In addition, Scheier catalogued all these entries onto a computer for easy reference by the maintenance crews of later times. He remembered that the maintenance routine had not changed much since the completion of the restoration work in the late 1960s, and that 20 years later the crews lacked sufficient educational and

\(^{49}\)Memorandum of Miller to SWR Director, June 8, 1987; Memorandum of Miller to SWR Director, Attn: Public Affairs Officer, September 24, 1987; Miller to Alex Haley, c/o Ms. Jackie Naipo, Kinte Corporation. Los Angeles, January 19, 1988, FODA Reading Files.

professional expertise to attempt more sophisticated methods of repair. Thus he implemented more training and schooling for the new hires under his purview. Black history programs also went beyond the barracks restoration ceremonies to include posters and site bulletins about the Buffalo Soldiers. The 1987 commemoration of the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution included the National Trust's "Uncommon Places" exhibit, which used Fort Davis as "the only NPS area represented" in the nationwide touring program. Superintendent Miller made special mention of the environmental activities of the park, which revolved around a visit by the U.S. Forest Service to prepare an "Historic Tree Management Plan." The federal government had restored the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), which permitted the use of several young people to work on the "historic trim painting project and on stone foundation masonry ruin work." Reflective of the need to embrace the latest technology at the park, Miller oversaw the computerization of Fort Davis' records, and the entry of some 3,000 museum items into the "Automated National Cataloguing System."51

One area that the park staff realized could benefit from more attention was community outreach. The Southwest Regional Office had inquired about the accessibility of Fort Davis' interpretive programs for non-English speakers. Steve Miller reported that "our current Spanish speaking visitors represent less than 1% of our total," and that the staff did not see a need to redesign the interpretive services to be completely bilingual. What Miller did recognize after this survey of interpretation was the need to maintain better community relations. "The History of Fort Davis study which has just begun," wrote the superintendent, "will include research on the civilian community, including the hispanic community at Fort Davis and its relationship with the military post." Miller hoped that "perhaps based on what material is found, we can develop more of an awareness and interest in the local hispanic community for the historic site." Until that document was completed, the park would consider "activities during Hispanic Awareness Week, the development of a site bulletin in Spanish, and improving the existing Spanish guide."52

Riding the crest of enthusiasm and energy driven by the successful barracks restoration project, the staff of Fort Davis in 1988 saw a return to the excitement and motivation of the park's early years. Superintendent Miller and his employees were nominated as one of five finalists from the NPS in the "Take Pride in America Awards" program. This national competition focused upon "individuals and public and private groups that conduct outstanding stewardship actions or awareness on behalf of public lands." Miller cited as Fort Davis' signal feature the barracks project, which "was largely paid for by donated funds and involved hundreds of individuals and groups volunteering thousands of hours towards the completion of the project." Mary Williams, well advanced into her research on the administrative history of her park, received an NPS Albright fellowship, which permitted her to attend the 1988 Western History


52 Memorandum of Miller to the SWR Director, December 4, 1987, FODA Reading Files.
Association meeting in Wichita, Kansas (she had earlier appeared on a panel devoted to the history of frontier military wives at the WHA's 1986 conference in Billings, Montana). Williams also was asked by Sul Ross State University to join its Center for Big Bend Studies as it planned a series of historical and cultural programs for the 1992 "Columbian Quincentennial;" an initiative to dramatize the significance of five centuries of cultural exchange since the European arrival in the Western Hemisphere. A similar national commemoration, the National Trust's exhibit on "America's Uncommon Places: The Blessings of Liberty," served as the basis of a 30-minute PBS documentary that year.53

Historical programs by themselves could generate publicity and recognition for Fort Davis, but the staff also had to address the basic issues in 1988 of maintenance and personnel that sustain any park. Funds were made available to complete the historic tree management study, as well as the painting of exterior trim on the historic structures. Again, the Youth Conservation Corps helped in this regard. Public concern about handicapped issues resulted in Fort Davis conducting a "Self-Evaluation of Program and Facility Access and Handicapped Access Plan." Among the solutions addressed was use of the $2,000 Garrison Gold budget increase to purchase "a TDD-a memory printer telecommunications device for the deaf." For "visitors who cannot walk long distances," the park applied its new monies to an electric golf cart. All these activities proved useful in the face of a six percent increase in visitation (to 54,775), which the park attributed to the dedication of the enlisted men's barracks. Sales of SPMA items also advanced to record levels, up some 18 percent over 1987 with sales volume of $48,377.09. The staff also assisted local groups in the charting of their own course of history, as Mary Williams worked with the re-energized Fort Davis Historical Society to compile a history of Jeff Davis County. In addition, the visitor center housed a special exhibit, "Preserving Your Personal Heritage." This exhibit sought to offer "helpful suggestions for storing old photographs, wood objects and clothing items, and included samples of preservation materials."54

To the surprise of few people in the Southwest Region, the continued commitment of Fort Davis to visitor services earned the park in 1988 its second straight Garrison Gold award. Steve Miller had departed for his new position as superintendent of Fort Scott National Historic Site when Mary Williams prepared the park's nomination in November, but the teamwork that had brought success to Fort Davis a year earlier was apparent in her prose. One use of the 1987 Garrison Gold funds was the purchase of materials "to construct viewing areas in [the commanding officer's quarters and the kitchen and servant's quarters] . . . similar to [those] in the enlisted men's barracks." These glass panels, said Williams, "will allow visitors access to the buildings anytime the site is open," and "their installation will mark a milestone at Fort Davis in that all refurnished buildings will be open every day." The park staff encouraged local officials

53Superintendent's Annual Report, 1988; Memorandum of Williams to the SWR Director, November 12, 1988, FODA Reading Files.

to declare the week of May 8-14 as "National Historic Preservation Week in Jeff Davis County," and April 15 was commemorated as national "Safety Awareness Day." Volunteers became more of a presence than ever, as the new barracks required much more interpretation of daily life for soldiers. The Friends of Fort Davis made their final accounting of their efforts on behalf of the barracks, listing some $135,000 in donations of cash and services. Among these items was $5,000 earned from the fifth annual Friends Restoration Festival. These ventures brought to Fort Davis another $1,000 in discretionary spending from the Southwest Regional Office, and another Pueblo storyteller figure to symbolize "the excellence of [the park's] interpretive program."  

The upward trajectory of Fort Davis in the 1980s would recede one day, as the momentum generated by the barracks restoration project and the national attention pursuant to that event faded. The continued depression of oil prices in west Texas, and the stagnation of the American economy in general, led Congress in the late 1980s and early 1990s to curtail NPS appropriations. Whomever would manage Fort Davis in this

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55Ibid.; Memorandum of Williams to the SWR Director, November 12, 1988.
Figure 50. Friends, volunteers and staff pose for group portrait upon receipt of the 1988 "Garrison Gold" Award. Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
time of transition would manage Fort Davis in this time of transition would face conditions not unlike those of the 1970s, when similar problems of local and national economics and politics restricted the ambitions and potential of the park. Into this situation came Fort Davis' first black superintendent, Kevin Cheri, a native of New Orleans with 16 years' experience in the park service as a ranger at Carlsbad Caverns, Buffalo River in Arkansas, and most recently years as a district ranger at Canyonlands in Utah. A graduate in physical therapy from Xavier University in his hometown, Cheri represented not only a new generation of NPS leadership; he also brought Fort Davis full-circle to its roots as a black military post in the nineteenth century. What Frank Smith prophesied 20 years earlier had come to fruition, and the work of Cheri and his staff to consolidate the gains of the 1980s would rise or fall on the fortunes of park service support as much as on local and regional interest.56

The Kevin Cheri years at Fort Davis (December 1988-July 1992) were marked both by expansion upon the base created by his predecessors, and by tragedy and trauma. Upon arriving at the park, Cheri faced two crises of significant proportions: the arsenic poisoning of his chief of maintenance, Dale Scheier, and the highly contentious "Davis Mountains Resource Study." As a new superintendent in an area that had not seen black authority figures, Cheri had to question his own personnel and residents of Fort Davis about very personal matters involving Scheier and his family. His inquiries could not isolate the cause of the poisoning on the job or in the housing compound where the maintenance chief lived. Such speculation had the potential to ruin relations between the park and the surrounding community. Cheri thus had to devote a good deal of his early weeks at Fort Davis on maintaining the park's reputation as a good neighbor as well as a source of employment, civic pride, and tourism.57

Compounding the new superintendent's work in the community was the shock generated by the Davis Mountains Resource Study. As he traveled from southeastern Utah to his new assignment in far west Texas, Cheri stopped in the Southwest Regional Office to discuss Fort Davis with regional director John Cook. For the first time, Cheri learned that the U.S. representative for the Trans-Pecos area, Ronald Coleman of El Paso, had attached an amendment to an Interior department bill authorizing the expenditure of $100,000 to determine the feasibility of creating a vast national park in the Davis Mountains. Cheri also heard that Coleman had been approached by several local ranchers whose properties were about to be sold for taxes, and they had hoped that the park service could pay them the full market value for their land while still retaining the rural character of the Davis Mountains. Thomas B. Carroll, a park planner in the region's division of planning, design and environmental coordination, spoke for many NPS personnel when he told his superiors in December 1988: "As we may be talking of

56Interview with Kevin Cheri, Assistant Superintendent, Big Bend National Park, Fort Davis, TX, September 8, 1994.

500,000 to 900,000 acres of land it is evident that the data needed at this stage of planning should be general in nature." That vagueness, plus the longstanding Texas opposition to large federal landownership in the state, and the local ranchers' pride in their self-sufficiency, planted the seeds of discord and suspicion that caught all NPS officials involved by surprise. This in turn presaged the more strident, and at times violent, western resistance movement of the 1990s wherein private landowners fought federal land agency rules, regulations, and personnel over matters such as the Davis Mountains study.58

In order for Superintendent Cheri to gain additional insight into the complexity of the Davis Mountains study issue, he sent to Santa Fe his supervisory ranger, John Sutton, to attend a December 1988 meeting with regional and Denver Service Center personnel. The Davis Mountains concept was part of a larger agenda of NPS initiatives that included the Mimbres Culture Study of the Gila Cliff Dwellings area of southwestern New Mexico, the Coronado Trail study of eastern Arizona and western New Mexico, and the "Spanish Colonization Study;" an activity promoted by Joseph Sanchez. Ranger Sutton reported to Kevin Cheri that "there is no written legislative direction for the Davis

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58Kevin Cheri interview, September 8, 1994; Memorandum of Chief, SWR Division of Land Resources, to Park Planner, SWR Division of Planning, Design, and Environmental Coordination, December 22, 1988; Memorandum of Thomas B. Carroll, SWR Park Planner, to Chief, Division of Land Resources, December 21, 1988, Davis Mountains Study, FODA Superintendent's Files.
Mountains Study," but that the Coleman had voiced concern to NPS director William Penn Mott that "future development in the mountains will create light pollution which will adversely affect the McDonald Observatory," as well as "disrupt the present land use in the mountains." The El Paso Democrat thus requested of the NPS "a broad range of management options to preserve the 'dark sky' for the Observatory and to preserve the present land use."59

Because of his knowledge of the Davis Mountains, John Sutton felt obligated to caution regional and DSC staff about the problems such an initiative could cause for his park. After presenting a slide show of the area, Sutton warned the attendees that a lack of prescribed study boundaries "could mean a park as large as 1.5 million acres." Further discussion indicated "some concern whether or not the Davis Mountains would meet National Park criteria," with park service officials agreeing that the area had only "regional significance." As Representative Coleman wanted the report completed before the close of the 1989 fiscal year, the attendees agreed to create a team of NPS and private individuals to divide the workload, led by Larry Beal of the DSC planning office. Sutton then asked the group to keep Fort Davis informed of all aspects of the study process, as "we would be answering questions by area residents over the proposal." The DSC offered to announce the initiation of the study, and to coordinate all public comment and meetings, thus freeing Fort Davis of the local logistics that its small staff might find overwhelming.60

While the NPS tried to comprehend the dimensions of Ronald Coleman's order, the congressman corresponded with park service director Mott about the larger implications of the study. Coleman had hoped that the language inserted in HR 4867 to "earmark" $100,000 for the project could "afford the Park Service discretion in the formulation of a general plan." The representative also wanted the NPS to "articulate appropriate alternatives for restricting land development and off-road access through central and southern Jeff Davis County." Coleman had included reference to the McDonald Observatory because the world-famous facility had recently been "nominated for designation as a National Historic Landmark." "In giving me the benefit of informal comments on any eventual proposal to create either a National Park or a National Wilderness Area in the range," Coleman informed Mott, "the University of Texas [owner of the observatory] has indicated that it would remain neutral on the question—and in fact would hope that land use would continue as practiced by the present high mountain ranch owners." Coleman's stated purpose was "not to contemplate usurpation of the ranches or private recreational land in the range by the federal government." Instead the Davis Mountains study should "plan a means of maintaining the area as presently used, enjoyed and worked." He then identified as threats not only the loss of McDonald's "dark sky," but also "the imminent potential for subdividing property in the region and because of speculation regarding the construction of a resort community in the immediate vicinity

59Memorandum of Sutton to FODA Superintendent, December 30, 1988, Davis Mountains Study File.

of the areas now under federal and state authority." Unaware that similar logic had
moved Judge D.A. Simmons some 40 years earlier to purchase the grounds of Fort
Davis, Coleman told director Mott: "I am aware that the Park Service maintains
responsibility for parks, monuments, scenic areas, recreation areas, scenic parkways and
National Trails, any of which may prove to be a designation which would respond to the
concerns of the residents of the Davis Mountains, scientific researchers and
preservationists." He asked Mott to "consider the advisability and feasibility of pursuing
these options within the scope of the study," and hoped "that you not hesitate to share
with me any impressions generated by the Park Service's attention to the area."61

Coleman's last sentence to Mott would prove prophetic, as local reaction began
building the moment that the park service mentioned the scale and scope of the Davis
Mountains initiative. Residents corresponded immediately with the El Paso congressman,
leading him to assure them, as he told Doug Faris, chief of the regional planning
division, that "the Park Service will assuredly hold a public meeting before proceeding
in any detail with the study." In order to protect the NPS and himself from accusations
of being "outsiders," Coleman accepted the offer of assistance from a local real estate
appraiser, Roy Scudday, whom the congressman recommended to Faris "without
hesitation as an individual whose knowledge of the area would undoubtedly prove helpful
in moving forward with any sort of study." Scudday's resume included years of
experience as an appraiser and real estate broker, as chief appraisal officer for Hudspeth
County (whose county seat was Sierra Blanca), as a field supervisor for the Texas
General Land Office, and as a consultant to several federal farm credit programs in the
Lone Star State. It did not hurt Scudday's chances that he was the husband of Ann
Scudday, county judge for Jeff Davis County who had worked with the park in years past
on issues of historic preservation and the landfill problem of the early 1980s. John Cook
had his staff prepare correspondence to Judge Scudday to solicit her support for the
Davis Mountains study, which he promised would be "to generally inventory the
resources from currently existing records, to make a preliminary assessment of
significance of the identified resources, and to develop a range of protection alternatives,
including a 'No Action' alternative." Judge Scudday's "participation in the planning
effort," said Cook, "will be greatly appreciated and valued," and he agreed to keep her
informed via a newsletter that the NPS would issue "to explain the resource study and
to invite public participation." For her part, Judge Scudday hosted a meeting in her
chambers with Larry Beal and the DSC personnel on February 23, 1989, at which time
the critical question for locals was "if the National Park Service has been approached by
any Jeff Davis County landowners with offers to sell land." The regional office
responded that no such inquiries had surfaced, and that the NPS "does not have

61 Ronald D. Coleman, U.S. House of Representatives, to William Penn Mott, NPS Director, December
6, 1988, Davis Mountains Study File.
Congressional authorization to negotiate for nor to acquire any lands in the Davis
Mountains."\(^{62}\)

Working with the Scuddays did not protect the NPS from local criticism, as hoped
by Ronald Coleman. He could have learned a lesson from Barry Scobee, who faced
similar opposition in 1961 when community members expressed opposition to the modest
transaction of 460 acres acquired by the federal government for the Fort Davis National
Historic Site. The *Alpine Avalanche* ran an NPS press release about the impending study
in late December, and the following week (January 5) had to provide more extensive
details in response to readers’ inquiries. "'We certainly have no pre-conceived ideas or
pre-drawn conclusions on what we'll find or hope to find,'" said Faris to the *Avalanche.*
Representative Coleman's office agreed, saying that "there was no hidden agenda, merely
the desire on the part of individuals, governmental agencies and non-government
organizations to protect the uniqueness of the area." Doug Faris did recall that the park
service had "'looked at the area 20 or 30 years ago, but nothing came of it at the time.'"
Perhaps thinking of the 1930s studies, the regional planning chief said that "for a long,
long time various people have expressed an interest in the future of the area,'" some of
whom "'have included some of the large landowners.'" Faris promised to incorporate
the thoughts of as many parties as wished to participate in the study, and that "'one focus
I think we might want to pursue is limiting the role of the NPS, and still keep the large
ranches.'"\(^{63}\)

These comments from someone as closely connected to the Davis Mountains study
as Doug Faris indicated the high degree of doubt and uncertainty about the motives of
the park service and of Representative Coleman. Thus the NPS had to conduct a
"reconnaissance study," consisting of data about the area's historical and natural resource
potential, with its own DSC, rather than using a private contractor to achieve a quicker
response time. For that reason the DSC and regional office turned to the staff of Fort
Davis for assistance on the ground in west Texas. Documents and secondary sources
from the park’s library formed the basis of the NPS survey, as did maps of the Davis
Mountains from the U.S. Geological Survey. Jim Carrico, superintendent of Big Bend
National Park, suggested that the study team work with the Texas Department of Parks
and Wildlife to ensure more accurate assessments of the many factors involved in the
project. Fort Davis staff then compiled a list of some "175 local residents, elected
officials, landowners, interest groups, and organizations" who would be invited to a
public meeting on the Davis Mountains concept.\(^{64}\)

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\(^{62}\)Coleman to Douglas D. Faris, Chief, SWR Division of Planning, January 12, 1989; SWR Director
to Honorable Ann Scudday, Judge of the Court of Jeff Davis County, Fort Davis, n.d. (draft); Associate
SWR Director, Planning and Resources Management, to Scudday, n.d. (draft), Davis Mountains Study
File.

\(^{63}\)"National park feasibility study to begin in February," *Alpine Avalanche*, January 5, 1989.

\(^{64}\)Davis Mountains Reconnaissance Study, Detailed Inventory and Analysis of Resources, Davis
Mountains, Texas, Scope of Work, January 31, 1989; Davis Mountains Resource Study Closeout,
December 1989, Davis Mountains Study File.
The more that local residents heard of the NPS project, the more contentious the rhetoric became in opposition. Ross McSwain, regional editor for the *San Angelo Standard-Times*, interviewed Fort Davis-area officials, none of whom would support the idea in public. County commissioner Ben Gearhart complained that "we can’t find out who started it," and Representative Coleman "won’t say who’s pimping for the park." Further aggravating local officials was the ignorance expressed toward the study by Republican U.S. Senator Phil Gramm and U.S. Representative Lamar Smith, a Republican from San Antonio. Growing outrage at this seeming waste of taxpayers’ money led the commissioner’s court for Jeff Davis County to pass a resolution opposed to the "acquisition of land in Jeff Davis County for a park or recreational uses." Sounding at once xenophobic and nostalgic, the commissioners declared that their county was "an area whose relative isolation from the problems of the population centers of Texas offers an opportunity for the visitors to the area to experience a degree of serenity unknown in other parts of the state and region." A critical feature of their hostility was the commissioners’ assertion that "governmental agencies have increasingly demonstrated their inability to effectively manage a parks system." As evidence they declared: "The more popular national parks have, in recent years, become infested with all of the vices of the contemporary population centers, including pollution, traffic jams, sewage disposal problems, crass commercialism and crime." To Jeff Davis County officials, this showed that "the attraction of people to the parks seems to outweigh the importance of conserving the land and its resources."65

Most troubling to the NPS and Representative Coleman was the move by local interests to create the "Davis Mountains Heritage Association," whose organizers told the San Angelo newspaper that they had contacted "some 80-100 area landowners" to "prepare for a showdown over what appears to be another question of land use." Ben Gearhart framed the debate in simple terms, telling reporter Ross McSwain: "'We’ll keep them [the NPS] in court for 20 years if necessary.'" The county commissioner claimed that "'this area already has 1,300,000 acres of park land and more than 150 parks." He did not include the vast Harte Ranch in neighboring Brewster County, which the family of the *San Angelo Standard-Times* publisher, Houston Harte, had recently donated to Big Bend National Park, nor the Big Bend Ranch in Presidio County, which the state of Texas had purchased in 1988. "'The National Park Service doesn’t have funds to adequately police what they have," said Gearhart. Joan Stocks Nobles, who operated the Sutler’s Boarding House in the town of Fort Davis, thought that the $100,000 study at first was "'a joke.'" While conceding that the community could use the infusion of cash generated by a new park, she knew of no one willing to defend the study. Further sealing its doom, Bryan LaBeff, Fort Davis school superintendent, worried that a vast Davis Mountains National Park would reduce property tax revenues upon which local public education depended. The school district would be "'hurt tremendously,'" LaBeff told the *Standard-Times*, and he feared that the Davis Mountains as a whole would suffer

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65 "Fort Davis opposes land survey," *San Angelo Standard-Times*, n.d.; "Resolution in opposition to the acquisition of land in Jeff Davis County for a park or recreational uses," n.d., Davis Mountains Study File.
if the federal government condemned land "that's been in a family for years and years."  

By the end of February 1989, local discontent had reached epidemic proportions. The park service announced that it would send its study team to the Davis Mountains from March 6-10, with a public meeting in Fort Davis on the night of Thursday, March 9. The DSC released the first of what it intended to be "quarterly" newsletters about the study, with a map enclosed that unwittingly fanned the flames of opposition. The Alpine Avalanche reported that "Jeff Davis, Presidio, Brewster, Culberson and even parts of Hudspeth, Pecos and Reeves counties are possible for inclusion in long-range studies." The vastness of this area frightened many in the Trans-Pecos region, as did Representative Coleman's assertion that the names of the ranchers pressing the study were "privileged information." Superintendent Cheri remembered six years later that the map and secrecy fed a sense of "paranoia" among certain residents, as evidenced in their comments to an Avalanche reporter just two weeks prior to the public meeting. Ben Gearhart volunteered that "we just want to get ahead of the hounds to stop this sort of thing." When queried by fellow county commissioner John Robert Prude about his reasoning, Gearhart replied: "I don't want them [the NPS] to take my house or take my land." Commissioner Chris Lacy complained in similar fashion: "Who's going to feed the nation if we keep taking land out of agriculture production?" County Judge Anne Scudday tried to blunt the arguments of the study's critics, noting that Brewster County did receive some $350,000 from the federal government in "money in lieu of taxes for property that is now part of the state and federal parks systems." Scudday's remarks did prompt some residents to speak in favor of the jobs that a new park could create, while "still others say they would prefer a park rather than see the big ranches continue to be divided into smaller and smaller pieces." But the most telling concern about the potential for development came from citizens fearing "the loss of Fort Davis, Marfa or Alpine as small communities if a large, thriving park were to be located near the towns." What these critics cited was popular imagery of "turning any of the towns into a Jackson Hole [Wyoming] or Aspen [Colorado] or Ruidosa [sic]," the latter a mountain resort in southern New Mexico; all places that had received much media coverage for their upscale lifestyles, trendy boutiques, overcrowded ski slopes, high property costs and taxes, and their disdain for the agrarian values of their long-time neighbors.  

With the die cast on the future of the Davis Mountain study, and with the staff of Fort Davis caught between local respect for their work and the supposed outrages of a coercive federal bureaucracy, the NPS made last-minute preparations to come to town for the March 9 hearing. Mary Williams placed a telephone call on February 28 to Ben Levy, asking if he could locate the bill introduced in Congress in 1926 by Claude

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Hudspeth to create "Davis Mountains National Park." In addition, she wanted to know the whereabouts of the files on the 1933 efforts to establish the "Davis Mountains National Monument." Levy, in his inimitable style, offered advice on the future of the project (which he preferred to call a "preauthorization," rather than a "resource" study). Williams wrote in her memorandum that Levy "was having a difficult time establishing or putting national value on the area-with the exception of 'preserving the dark sky.'" The senior NPS historian felt that "we may need to revamp our thinking along lines of establishing a scientific or astronomical reserve and not a national park." It also bothered Levy that the team of NPS officials (of whom he was a member) that had visited Fort Davis in the summer of 1988 to study its "Resource Management Plan" had ignored his call for inclusion of "resources outside of the immediate area" of the park. Now that they had to face the question without proper detail, the park service, in Levy’s estimation, should ask people like Bob Utley or Erwin Thompson for advice. He also worried that the McDonald Observatory, the putative beneficiary of the project, would "officially be neutral." "They don’t have to support a national park" said the senior historian, "but they do need to let it be known that [their] work depends on maintaining (preserving) a black sky." 68

Levy’s concerns at a distance in Washington were mirrored in Denver by Larry Beal, team leader with the DSC. After speaking with Levy, Mary Williams received a call from Beal late in the afternoon of February 28 expressing his doubts about the Fort Davis hearing. As of that late date, Beal "had not received an approved task directive on the project (signed) from either Washington or region [Santa Fe]." The team leader "had not been able to [proceed] in an orderly fashion," in part because of the "time constraints." The DSC official disliked trying to collapse one year’s planning work into a few weeks, and worried that the "region is supposed to be the leader in this project." Nonetheless, Beal made plans to bring eight staff members from the DSC and regional office, who would join Fort Davis’ Kevin Cheri, John Sutton and Mary Williams on a three-day tour of the area. Among their planned activities were a lecture by Williams on "ranching history of Jeff Davis County," comments by Clay Miller on his family’s life in the area, a visit to the "new ‘ranchette subdivisions," a meeting at Davis Mountain State Park with state park regional director Tom Palmer, flights over the terrain, and a tour of the McDonald Observatory.69

Those who attended the fateful meeting on March 9 in the crowded St. Joseph’s Church in Fort Davis long remembered the level of anxiety and doubt that permeated the air. Gene Hendryx agreed to broadcast the proceedings live over his radio station in Alpine, and the NPS staff estimated that over 500 people had jammed the hall and spilled out into the parking lot. Neil Mangum, then Southwest survey historian, recalled the

68 Telephone Record, Conversation between Mary Williams and Ben Levy, February 28, 1989, Davis Mountains Study File.

fears articulated by all speakers, who preferred rejection of the study by a wide margin. 
The DSC's "closeout" report on the study, drafted in December 1989, noted that the only 
speaker in favor of the project was Jose Sanchez, district director for Representative 
Coleman. The report also detailed the reasons cited by attendees for opposing the plan:
"Fear of federal condemnation of land, loss of property tax revenues, and fear of 
unregulated tourism and vandalism." 
"Several speakers," said the report, "were extremely emotional and sincerely felt that the Park Service would condemn their land for a national park." Outside the meeting room, however, "several individuals privately expressed their interest and support of further NPS involvement to planning team members." Unfortunately, as Neil Mangum recalled in a 1995 interview, one speaker told park service personnel that he would "settle things outside" if they did not accede to the community's desire to quash the study immediately.70

On the morning of Friday, March 10, Doug Faris called the office of 
Congressman Coleman to report the response of meeting attendees, and to suggest that 
the NPS halt the Davis Mountains study altogether. Larry Beal reiterated this sentiment 
in his "trip report" of March 6-10 to his DSC superiors. Local residents, said Beal, 
gave us the clear message that there was much misinformation about the National Park 
Service and the resource study process." In addition, Beal detected "a great deal of 
distrust of federal and state government." Speaking rather candidly, Beal further 
declared: "Congressman Coleman grossly underestimated the opposition of his 
constituents regarding federal involvement in Jeff Davis County." The irony of this 
conclusion was that the NPS study team only two weeks earlier had concluded that the 
area merited study for its undeniable beauty, and for the need to preserve the very 
lifestyle that critics claimed that the federal government despised. Beal went so far in 
a trip report of February 21-27 as to suggest that "protection alternatives should include 
continued private and local management of resources with some mechanism to buy failing 
ranches and keep the land ownership in large units for cattle grazing purposes." Also 
of merit would be response to the "demand for public recreation facilities in the form of 
hiking trails to some of the more scenic areas and possibly a north-south hiking route." 
While not willing to dismiss a project in which he had invested so much time and energy, 
Beal nonetheless offered the DSC several options: to terminate the study immediately and 
reprogram the remaining funds; to prepare a report on the "resource significance and 
initial alternatives;" and to "revise the scope of the resource study to include the resource 
inventory and resource significance elements."71

Public announcement of the inevitable cancellation of the Davis Mountains study 
would not come for several weeks after the Fort Davis hearing. Yet all parties 
concerned knew that the idea was dead, much as it had perished in the 1930s for the 
same reasons of ranchers' power and fear of repressive government. Dudley Harrison,

70Davis Mountains Resource Study Closeout; Gene Hendryx interview, January 5, 1995; Interview with 
Neil Mangum, Chief, SWR Division of History, Santa Fe, June 9, 1995.

71Neil Mangum interview, June 9, 1995; Trip Reports of Larry Beal to Assistant Manager, Central 
Team, DSC, February 21-27, March 6-10, 1989, Davis Mountains Study File.
state representative for the Davis Mountains, wrote to Kevin Cheri on March 15 to thank him for his work on the study, and to console him with the idea that "the outcome was the best for all concerned." To his regional superiors, the superintendent reported that "despite strong opposition from the community and the halting of the study in March, Fort Davis NHS was able to maintain excellent rapport with the citizens of the area." While that was his official comment, made some twelve months after the incident, Cheri spent the next three years, as he recounted in a 1994 interview, "trying to rebuild local confidence in Fort Davis." Thus it was cold comfort to Cheri and the park staff to read the regional office press release of April 5, declaring that "as a result of public concern in West Texas over the Davis Mountains Resource Study initiated in March by the National Park Service, Congressman Ronald Coleman (D-TX) has directed the National Park Service to stop the resource study and reprogram remaining funds for other Service studies and plans." Even more ironic was the fact that regional director John Cook came to the Davis Mountains in April to present to the park its second "Garrison Gold" award. Several reporters asked Cook if the NPS was "not being totally up-front about the entire [study] issue." But Cook came away realizing, in the words of Kevin Cheri, that "the community has vowed to help make the Garrison Gold Award an annual event at Fort Davis."\(^{72}\)

The staff and volunteers persisted in delivering quality programs for the visitors, which in 1989 numbered 55,098; an increase of slightly more than one-half of one percent. More appealing to the superintendent was the increase in volunteer hours: up 75 percent over 1988 (some 7,000 hours). This figure helped offset the decline in SPMA sales of five percent, down from the all-time high set in 1988. When Cheri drafted the park's application for the 1989 Garrison Gold competition, he could point with pride to several "firsts" in programs and activities. The addition of "viewing boxes" in all quarters allowed visitors to see the structures and their furnishings throughout the year on a "self-guiding basis." The staff also began conducting nighttime tours of the grounds. Called "From Retreat to Tattoo," the moonlight program was designed to provide visitors with "the evening setting, after the work day had finished," with staff and volunteers depicting roles of "enlisted men, officers, officers' wives, servants, and the post trader." The Fort Davis staff took particular pride in developing the "first book, to our knowledge, written specifically for adolescents on the role played by the frontier army in the settlement and development of the American West." They also "encouraged and worked with a volunteer (an accomplished artist) to write and illustrate a color and activity book for children specifically on Fort Davis."\(^{73}\)

Historic themes and research also occupied much of the staff's time in 1989, as the now-standard interpretive and exhibit features on black history were joined by the

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\(^{72}\)Kevin Cheri interview, September 8, 1994; Dudley Harrison, Texas State Representative, Austin, to Cheri, March 15, 1989; Superintendent's Annual Report, 1989; News Release, "NPS Directed to Stop Davis Mountains Resource Study," April 5, 1989; Cheri to Coleman, April 12, 1989, Davis Mountains Study File.

\(^{73}\)Memorandum of Cheri to the SWR Director, December 13, 1989, FODA Reading Files.
commemoration of a month (March) dedicated to women's history. February's black history theme was "The Role of Afro-American Churches in Economic, Political, and Social Development at Home and Abroad." To that end, ranger Randy Kane prepared a site bulletin and a series of newspaper articles on chaplains of black troops. Also sponsored at Fort Davis during Black History Month was a four-part film series devoted to the contributions of blacks to the settlement of the West. Superintendent Cheri took special pride in the park's first black volunteer, Stephen Martin, who "served as an interpreter in the refurnished enlisted men's barracks, a member of the artillery crew, and participated in the campfire program held at the Davis Mountain State Park." Women's history received attention through articles syndicated in west Texas newspapers, as well as "a special publication display, featuring books on 19th century women." The Regional Educational Center of Odessa also came to Fort Davis to put on videotape the park's slide presentation on western women. Alice Grierson's *An Army Wife's Cookbook: With Household Hints and Remedies*, came out in its seventh printing with SPMA, as did a new publication, *The Colonel's Lady on the Western Frontier: The Correspondence of Alice Kirk Grierson*. Archeology also earned a place in the program of historical commemoration that year, as the staff marked Texas Archeological Awareness Week (April 9-15) with an exhibit of artifacts uncovered in the restoration of the park's many historic structures. The Friends also contributed to these historic activities, with a long-range project to restore the front yards along Officers' Row to their 1880s vegetation and appearance. They also raised $5,500 at the annual Restoration Festival to augment the park's budget for items that could not be acquired otherwise.\(^{74}\)

For the next three years, Fort Davis suffered with its peers throughout the national park system as budget reductions in Washington continued, along with the stagnant economy induced in part by the oil price collapse. Each fiscal year, Kevin Cheri wrote to the regional office to explain how he would manage with reductions in his budget requests of ten percent and more. In October 1990, the NPS suffered the indignity of another forced closure due to failed budget negotiations between Republican President George Bush and the Democratic-controlled Congress. These limitations on funding also delayed indefinitely the preparation of a General Management Plan, which embarrassed Superintendent Cheri when Robert Bluthardt, Director of Education at San Angelo's Fort Concho (a National Historical Landmark), asked about Fort Davis' strategy for resource maintenance and enhancement. "Without a GMP," said the superintendent, "we are unable to tell you what will happen in the years to come at Fort Davis." This also complicated Cheri's relationship with the Friends group, who sought a new project to continue their contributions to the park's historical interpretation. Cheri noted that they had their hearts set on restoration of the chapel, which lacked the normal 70 percent minimum of original fabric. In addition, the back wall of the existing ruins would have to be replaced in any restoration project. Cheri instead encouraged the Friends to shift their attention to the post hospital. By refurnishing what he called a "few

offices" in the building, the Friends could provide visitors with what Cheri described as "the best extant example of a frontier U.S. army post hospital in the Southwest."

One highlight of the years 1990-1992 at Fort Davis was the effort to produce scholarly work on the park, as well as to continue the NPS's tradition of support for outside research that advanced knowledge about the park's resources. Dr. Lavern Wagner of Quincy College in Illinois asked Fort Davis to recommend him to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a grant to edit the music of Benjamin Grierson. Mary Williams would offer commentary on an historic resources study on Big Bend undertaken by Arthur R. Gomez, then of the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. She did similar work for Fort Davis' own historic resources study written by Robert Wooster, a faculty member at Corpus Christi State University and a rising star in the field of western military history. James Ivey, staff archeologist for the Southwest Region, prepared a Historic Base Map for Fort Davis that permitted publication of the area's Guide to Buildings and Ruins. The park also planned programs and services for several related historical themes of the early 1990s: the centenary of the abandonment of Fort Davis (1991), the diamond jubilee of the creation of the National Park Service (1991), and the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus into the Western Hemisphere (1992). Staff members contributed time and expertise to the living history days celebrated at nearby Forts McKavett, Concho, and Stockton; this in conjunction with Fort Davis' own exhibit and slide show prepared on "Historic Forts of Texas." Elaine Harmon, hired as museum technician in 1989, conducted more work with cataloguing the artifacts at Fort Davis, and lent her expertise to other parks in the Trans-Pecos region. Perhaps the most unusual historical activity, however, was the park's participation in the NPS-wide "Imagine Yellowstone Arts Festival." Two years after devastating fires swept the nation's oldest national park, the NPS had developed a series of projects for schoolchildren to teach them the complexities of nature and its power. Not to be overlooked in the park's 1990 historical programs was the inauguration of the nationwide program known as "Elderhostel." Designed to provide senior citizens with travel programs grounded in educational and cultural experiences, the organization brought bus tours of seniors to Fort Davis twice per month to walk the grounds and study the life of the frontier military.

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75Kevin Cheri interview, September 8, 1994; Memoranda of Cheri to the Associate SWR Director, Administration, January 22, February 6, 1990; Cheri to Robert F. Bluthardt, Director of Education, Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, San Angelo, March 20, 1990; Cheri to Lucinda Keister, Prints and Photographs Collection, History of Medicine, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, MD, April 19, 1990, FODA Reading Files.

76Cheri to Dr. Lavern Wagner, Quincy, IL, May 8, 1990; Memorandum of Cheri to Bill Sontag, 75th Anniversary Project Director, Rocky Mountain Region, NPS, July 30, 1990; Memorandum of Williams to the SWR Director, Attention: Chief Historian, August 16, 1990; Cheri to B. Butts, Lucerne Valley, CA, October 31, 1990; Williams to Ratri Banerjee, Senior Researcher, Regional Editor: Mid-Atlantic, Southwest, National Geographic Traveler, Washington, DC, November 28, 1990; Memorandum of Williams to Historian, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, March 30, 1990, FODA Reading Files; Superintendent's Annual Report, 1990.
Once the tourist season of 1990 slackened, Superintendent Cheri decided to take an "intellectual inventory" of sorts of his park. Now that he had almost two years' exposure to the workings of Fort Davis, and the memories of Dale Scheier's illness and the Davis Mountains study had begun to recede, Cheri turned his attention to the need for a long-range planning document for the park. Mary Williams had reported that she had completed three-quarters of the research toward her administrative history, while Robert Wooster was engaged in last-minute revisions of his contract for the History of Fort Davis. The park had managed to overcome the failure of Texas A&M University to "fulfill the terms of their contract" to draft an historic structures report, as the NPS sent a team from its Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) to prepare the document. What concerned Cheri was that other critical documents and reports needed to form the basis of a General Management Plan were not in place. "The Statement for Management approved in 1976," the superintendent told his Santa Fe superiors, "does not identify any management issues and is presently being rewritten." The 1988 resource management plan already needed updating, as it "underestimates the enormous tasks of cataloguing the backlog of approximately 10,000 objects in the park's collection." Nor did Fort Davis have "a complete inventory of natural resources, including wildlife." The interpretive prospectus that Doug McChristian had complied in 1983 "is also outdated," said Cheri. The park's 223 identified historic structures had no separate maintenance crew, resulting in the regular crew devoting only 30 percent of their time to stabilization and preservation work. From this had come a two-year delay in preservation projects. The aging of the park also meant that the museum and visitors center, once the pride of the Southwest Region, needed updating and improvements. Unfortunately, Fort Davis ranked only "13th amongst the region's priorities to rehabilitate the museum and will not likely have any renovation work started before 1996." Cheri did not need to elaborate the relationship between limited staffing and preservation shortcomings. "With five furnished structures that are fully restored, and two storage areas," he concluded, "it is not possible to monitor all these buildings and maintain the high standards of preservation and accountability" with but one full-time museum technician.\(^7\)

By the time that Kevin Cheri entered his third year as manager of Fort Davis, the momentum had shifted once again from reaction to outside forces to implementation of projects and activities. His annual report to the Southwest Region could rightly claim 1991 as "a banner year for interpretive programs, for improving the stability of cultural resources, and for making the area more accessible for disabled visitors." Fort Davis took a "lead role in implementing a community recycling program," with the park coordinating logistics with the local chamber of commerce, the McDonald Observatory, and the nearby state park. The Prude Ranch also asked Fort Davis to become a partner in its "Prude Ranch Environmental Education Center." The Texas Education Association had encouraged formation of such centers to link classroom learning and field observations in ecology and environmental studies. Some 750 youth from around the

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\(^7\) Memorandum of Cheri to the SWR Director, September 12, 1990, FODA Reading Files.
Lone Star State came to the Davis Mountains that year for the Prude Ranch programs, with an estimated 2,000 more scheduled for the following year.78

Having studied physical therapy in college, Kevin Cheri took great pride in meeting the mandates of the recently passed Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). He ordered his maintenance crew to upgrade park facilities with the handicapped in mind. This included modifying walkways and entrances to the historic buildings to accommodate wheelchairs, and receipt of "rehab/repair funds" to remodel the visitor center restrooms for "disabled population access." Work like this performed by the maintenance crew enabled the park to receive a "Maintenance Management System Award" (MMS) for medium-size parks in the Southwest Region, and Chief Dale Scheier served on an NPS task force to draft an MMS training manual. Other fund increases permitted work on drainage and pavement of roads and the parking lot. In addition, the maintenance crew (which included Youth Conservation Corps and Summer Youth Employment and Training Program [SYETP] personnel) worked on hiking trails damaged by torrential rains in the summer of 1990. Plastering of several historic buildings was accomplished with funds from a regional "four-park" stabilization project, and paint used in the original restoration phase was analyzed for its toxic content.79

These accomplishments in park performance, when judged in light of the early days of Kevin Cheri's superintendency, led to his own advancement within the ranks of the NPS. In July 1992, Cheri accepted a transfer to Big Bend National Park as its assistant superintendent. Within days of his departure, however, Cheri witnessed one final trauma that seemed to "bookend" his tenure as the Fort Davis superintendent: a tragic automobile accident on the night of July 4 that claimed the lives of two park employees (cooperative education student Darrin Young and volunteer John Bullock), and that injured two others (cooperative education student Arthur Campbell and volunteer Thomas Vanzant). Young and Campbell were students at the University of Arkansas campus at Pine Bluff; a predominantly black institution where Kevin Cheri had recruited in search of black youth interested like himself in park service careers. As Cheri learned from his investigation, Bullock (a student at nearby Sul Ross State University) had offered to drive the party away from town during the evening of the July 4th festivities to "shoot old weapons" in the rocks. Alcohol was consumed by the four individuals, and upon their return down the mountain, Bullock's truck left the road, killing himself and Young. Beyond the trauma of the deaths, the park staff lost four good employees, as Campbell and Vanzant could not return to work for the remainder of the summer. This accident left the park and the town in a state of shock, leading Kevin Cheri's replacement as superintendent, Jerry Yarbrough, to state that Fort Davis "was hurting" when he arrived on duty in September 1992.80

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79Ibid.

As the eighth individual to lead Fort Davis, Jerry Yarbrough brought a new
dimension to park management. He was the first native of west Texas to assume the
superintendency, having been raised in the town of Andrews north of Midland/Odessa.
A veteran of the conflict in Vietnam, Yarbrough had pursued a career in the Park Service
as a law enforcement ranger. His most recent posting had been as chief ranger at White
Sands National Monument, where he worked with Superintendent Dennis Ditmanson to
improve the climate of opinion within the local community of Alamogordo towards
the park and its staff. That became Yarbrough's primary concern when he took control of
Fort Davis. He recalled three years into his superintendency that his first impression of
the park was "how striking were the natural and cultural resources." He also marveled
at the extent of volunteer services, and he vowed to increase the number of black
volunteers (to "eight or nine" by 1995). These individuals who donated so much time
to the park, along with the staff, were the reason that Fort Davis had what Yarbrough
called "one of the best living history programs I had ever seen." Yarbrough credited this
attitude of cooperation and volunteer support to the work of his team of full-time
employees, including his supervisory ranger, Allan Morris, park ranger Mary Williams,
museum technician Elaine Harmon, park ranger Carl Friery, and administrative staff
members Suzanne Liddell and Paula Jo Bates.81

With an interest in history and a love of the NPS, the new superintendent
addressed the need for a General Management Plan, a better data base of history and
cultural resources, and the necessity to guide the community and the Friends group as
both sought more restoration work at the park. Residents of Fort Davis and the
surrounding area were pleased to meet the new park manager, but Yarbrough detected
some concern that he would not remain long in the position. Coming after the traumas
of the Kevin Cheri era, Yarbrough soon realized that he needed to make a long-term
commitment to the park, as well as to the community. To that end, he advised regional
director John Cook that he wished to make Fort Davis his one and only managerial
position, and he invested much time and effort with various civic groups. Among these
was the Chamber of Commerce, which in 1994 named him its "Citizen of the Year."
Yarbrough's accomplishments included organizing the group, "Preservation Fort Davis,"
designed to provide local residents with more information about the blessings and curses
of growth, in particular the wisdom of preserving old buildings rather than destroying
the historical fabric of the town. The superintendent, whose skill as a carpenter also
served him well, contributed to structural enhancement by working with the Fort Davis
maintenance crew to rehabilitate the "church camp" in Hospital Canyon. There they
completely refurbished the interior, which had deteriorated over the years through neglect,
and created with donated materials and labor an attractive if spartan lodge and meeting
center for groups and scholars coming to the park for extended visits. In the winter of
1993, the park acquired and installed a Bally Building for archival storage and
protection.82

81Jerry Yarbrough interview, August 11, 1995; Welsh, Dunes and Dreams, 182-83.

82Jerry Yarbrough interview, August 11, 1995, January 12, 1996.
Figure 52. Telephone Pioneers install decking of enlisted men’s barracks wooden walkway (August 1994). Courtesy Fort Davis NHS.
Figure 53. Telephone Pioneers laying substructure of wooden walkway at enlisted men’s barracks (August 1994). Courtesy Tom Hulett.
This desire for better community relations would consume much of Jerry Yarbrough's early years as Fort Davis' superintendent, with both committee work and negotiations with the Friends group the central features of park outreach activity. Yarbrough negotiated with the Friends to redirect their attention away from structures with less than 70 percent original fabric, and found a useful project for them in the building of the wooden boardwalk along the enlisted men's barracks. Utilizing volunteer labor (from the Telephone Pioneers of America Permian Basin Chapter), grant money from the National Park Foundation, and Fort Davis's own maintenance crew, the park in 1994 received yet another benefit from the committed individuals who admired the park's story and wished to enhance its telling. Unfortunately for the Friends group, they realized by the mid-1990s that they had competition from other Labor Day weekend venues, which led to reduced gate receipts for non-budgetary items that the park needed. Yet the park did not suffer completely from a loss of interest in volunteer support, as the University of Pennsylvania sent out to Fort Davis in the summer of 1993 a group of graduate students from its Architectural Conservation Laboratory to work for two weeks on "stabilizing historic plaster" in several of the structures. This was the first year of a three-year program that culminated in 1995. This activity inspired the staff in June 1993 to conduct a week-long "Ruins Stabilization Workshop" on site, with NPS employees and state parks personnel from Texas and New Mexico in attendance.83

One issue of structural maintenance that concerned Yarbrough and the staff in 1993 was the need for a new pedestrian bridge across the south flood diversion ditch, between the parking lot and the administrative offices of the park. The original bridge was some 100 feet upstream from the proposed new structure, and the placing of its abutments in the streambed had rendered it vulnerable to flooding, both for its exposure to surging streamflows and the erosion caused by water coursing around the abutments. By constructing a new bridge, the park would not only reduce the harm to the structure and the streambanks. It would also guide patrons more efficiently to the visitors center without the need to realign the existing dimensions of visitor access. When Jerry Yarbrough became superintendent, he and the staff discussed the merits of the planning for the bridge, and decided that these needed amending. They preferred a wooden structure, even though steel had first been suggested for its durability. In addition, the staff wished the bridge to remain at its original location. To that end, bids were delayed until the ramifications of these change orders could be calculated. Jerry Yarbrough's logic in this situation served as a guide to his thinking in other matters of historic preservation. "Fort Davis is a highly sensitive historical site," he wrote in the "Scope of Work" on the bridge proposal. "Any planning, design, or construction," declared Yarbrough, "must be accomplished in such a manner as to avoid or minimize impacts on the historic scene or fabric."84

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84Scope of Work, Pedestrian Bridge, Fort Davis NHS, n.d., FODA Superintendent’s Files.
Yarbrough's attention to detail with the park's historic resources echoed his commitment to quality in interpretive programs and personnel management. In April 1993, Yarbrough, Mary Williams, and Friends treasurer Jerry Johnson traveled to Austin to attend the Texas Historical Commission's annual preservation conference. There the Friends received the prestigious "Driscoll Award" for "having the most successful preservation story in the State of Texas." This prize came to Fort Davis for the overall program of preservation conducted over three decades at the park. Yarbrough wanted the Driscoll Award to serve as a guide to other historical projects, and to that end he supported the work already underway for the 1992 Columbian Quincentennial. Fort Davis also organized two traveling educational trunks for elementary students, each focusing upon "Spanish Colonial Explorations." There was in addition a "Columbus art contest" for area schools, with the submissions displayed on the lawn of the Jeff Davis County courthouse during the 4th of July celebration. The staff assisted the Lou Reda Production company in their filming of a documentary entitled, "Crossed Sabres: The History of the U.S. Horse Cavalry." They also commemorated National Historic Preservation Week in 1992 with an exhibit on adobe construction, as well as showing visitors a video entitled, "From the Ground Up: West Texas Adobe." Black history received attention, as Yarbrough invited Bob Snead of El Paso to bring his one-man show on Lieutenant Henry Flipper to the Friends Restoration Festival. Then in April 1994, the park took great pride in hosting the unveiling of the U.S. Postal Service's "Buffalo Soldier" stamp, complete with dignitaries and speeches about the importance of black units to the settlement of the West.\(^5\)

These accomplishments also permitted Superintendent Yarbrough to move the discussion forward on a General Management Plan. In June 1994, he had invited to the park a team of NPS professionals to conduct a survey of the park's needs and potential. From this came in October 1995 the "Fort Davis Historic Site Strategic Plan." As evidence of the need for a GMP, the team and Fort Davis personnel explained that the Davis Mountains were growing with residential and commercial development, as well as with tourism. One example of this was news that the McDonald Observatory, already an attractive site to visitors, would construct the world's second-largest viewing telescope (some 400 inches in diameter, or four times the size of the existing largest telescope at the observatory). This would generate as many as 200,000 or more visitors to the area, which at best had 100 motel rooms and only one-half dozen restaurants. Another issue impinging upon Fort Davis was the "pressure for reconstruction/restoration from the community and the Friends of Fort Davis." Such activities, said Yarbrough, "tend to focus staff, funding, and visitor attention on those buildings rather than place energy and limited funds on original fabric."\(^6\)

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\(^5\)Superintendent's Annual Reports, 1992, 1993; Allan R. Morris, Supervisory Park Ranger, FODA, to Michael B. Grossi, Houston, TX, March 26, 1994; Memorandum of Yarbrough to SWR Director, April 25, 1994, FODA Reading Files.

While the park identified its needs and concerns in its strategic plan, events far from west Texas in the fall and winter of 1995-1996 threatened both the funding base of the park and visitor access to the historic treasures within its boundaries. A major restructuring program swept the NPS in 1994 and 1995. This reflected both the Clinton administration's program for "Reinventing Government," and the Republican party's "Contract With America" to shrink even further the obligations, duties, and costs of federal service to the nation. This process not only placed in limbo the ideas that Superintendent Yarbrough had planned for his park as a result of receiving long-overdue budget increases in 1994 and 1995. It also led to forced closures in November and December 1995, and January 1996, denying the staff the ability to provide the visiting public with the level of cultural resource management that had garnered so much praise for Fort Davis. These draconian measures came on the heels of efforts in Congress to "de-commission" smaller parks, with Fort Davis on a list of 200 NPS units suggested for closure by Interior secretary Bruce Babbitt if the nation's lawmakers made good on their promises to shrink the size of government.

When federal employees returned to their workplaces in mid-January 1996, there would be doubts and concerns about the continued commitment of Washington and the taxpayers to the maintenance of Fort Davis and its peers in the national park system. "Downsizing" had become the code word of the day, and hopes had dimmed for additional funds for a GMP or for any other program. Thus in an ironic historical twist, the National Park Service of the late twentieth century faced conditions and uncertainties not unlike those of the U.S. Army, which had found itself in the 1890s with surplus properties like Fort Davis when the American people no longer needed soldiers to ensure the "winning" of the West.

Were Senator Redfield Proctor to return at the close of the twentieth century to the high mountain valley of west Texas that he had visited ten decades earlier, he might be surprised that the military post that he had ordered closed had survived the ravages of time and the elements. Yet he would also recognize the commitment and care extended by the Fort Davis staff and management to the stone and adobe buildings that once housed the frontier troops. Proctor might conclude that teamwork had been the guiding principle for success from the days of Barry Scobee and the Davis Mountains local sponsors, to Robert Utley and other park service planners, through the restoration process of the 1960s and the living history initiatives of the 1970s. Once these forces had played out at Fort Davis, the staff in the 1980s looked to consolidate the gains of the first generation of park management. This they found in private sector support of the activities of Fort Davis, especially the barracks restoration project. Just as in the 1890s, when the nation questioned the wisdom of public service, and faced the challenges of a new century, so did the NPS seek to renew and invigorate the "finest frontier military post in the Southwest" to appeal to a new era of visitors and scholars. The ghosts of Redfield Proctor, Benjamin Grierson, and the hundreds of soldiers and support personnel who crossed the parade grounds of Fort Davis symbolized both an earlier century's desire for expansion and development of the West, and its refocusing of attention away from the Davis Mountains once that task was completed. Yet the staff and management of the National Park Service, from Michael Becker to Jerry Yarbrough, saw to it that
future generations of Americans would see the past as Proctor, et al., knew it, and ensured that the history of the frontier Army would not again slip from the nation's collective memory.
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INDEX

A
Abbott, George W. 87
Adams, County Judge Wanda 164
Adams, Don 41
Africa 92, 238
Aggerman, Antonio 25
Alamo 3, 227, 231
Albright, Horace M. 34, 36
Albright Training Center 142, 158
Albuquerque, New Mexico 45
Alexander, Robin 228
Alkire, Mrs. A.N. 59
Allen, Thomas J. 25, 85, 97-99, 101, 120, 179, 180
Alpine (TX) High School 219
Alpine Avalanche 32-34, 44-46, 48, 56-61, 75, 78, 88, 165, 166, 206, 217, 222, 229, 232, 247, 249
American Bar Association (ABA) 56
American Folk Culture Festival 194
American Motor Freight Company 28
American Rifleman 227
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 256
Amon Carter 43, 125
Amon Carter Museum of Western Art 125
Amtrak 174
Anderson, U. S. Senator Clinton P. 21, 73, 89, 117, 191
Anheuser-Busch Brewing Company 223
Annie Riggs Museum 233
Antiquities Act (1906) 34
Apache Pass 82
Apaches 2, 5, 6, 8, 44, 156, 194, 198, 202
Appleman, Roy 98, 127, 128
Archivo General Nacional (AGN) 28
Arizona 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 29, 70, 87, 95, 100, 133, 135, 142, 160, 177, 186, 187, 204, 210, 232, 235, 236, 244
Arizona and the West 210
Arizona Republic 187
Armed Forces Day 126
Army Air Corps 188
Army of the West 139
Army-Navy Museum 182
Arnett, G. Ray 228
Arnold, Matthew 143, 220
Ashley, Douglas 184
Aspinall, U.S. Representative Wayne N. 81, 82, 89
Aston, Rogers 209
Austin American-Statesman 233
Automated National Cataloguing System 239

B
Babbitt, Bruce 262
Baby Boom 53-55, 76, 151
Balmorhea state park 52
Bandana Room 60
Barracks Restoration Festival 221, 229
Barrel, Bob 231
Barrett, Donald C. 171, 172
Bartholomew, Ed 59
Bates, Paula Jo 257
Battle of Glorieta Pass 6
Battle of Rattlesnake Springs 125
Battle of the Little Bighorn 187
Battle of Tinaja de las Palmas 7, 124, 125
Baylor, Colonel John 5, 50
Baylor University 50
Beal, Larry 245, 246, 250, 251
Beale, Lieutenant Edward F. 4
Beard, Daniel B. 105, 114, 116, 126, 134, 142, 144, 146
Bearss, Edwin C. 212, 213
Becker, Michael 93, 95-101, 103, 104, 106, 114-117, 121-131, 133, 135, 136, 163, 262
Bencomo, Pablo 22, 54, 99, 100, 104, 116, 117, 134, 136, 150-152, 158, 159, 166, 172, 177-179, 224
Bent’s Old Fort National Historic Site 233
Bentley, George 132
Bentley, Senior, Private George 132
Bicentennial of the American Revolution 198
Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution 239
Big Bend Area Travel Association 235
Big Bend Art Club 75
Big Bend Community Action Agency 151
Big Bend National Park 43, 49, 59, 61, 73, 78, 88, 99, 114, 140, 159, 161, 236, 243, 247, 248, 256
Big Bend Ranch 248
Big Thicket 186
Billy Jack 188
Billy the Kid 8
Bingaman, U.S. Senator Jeff 222
Black History Month 228, 229, 236, 253
Blackburn, James A. 207
Bleser, Nicholas "Nick" 153, 159, 160, 181, 183, 185, 190, 191, 194, 195
Bloom, John Porter 78, 80, 81
Bloom, Lansing 80
Bloys, Dr. William B. 13-15
Bloys, Herbert 10 33, 34
Bluthardt, Robert 253, 254
Bolton, Herbert Eugene 3, 19
Boquillas Hot Springs 43
Borderlands 3, 19
Borderlands thesis 19
Boy Scouts 230
Briggs, John 7
Brown, Junior, T.H. 25, 26
Brown, William "Bill" 114, 115, 191
Brugge, David M. 202, 203
Bruner, Thomas 217, 221
Budweiser Beer 223
Buffalo Soldier Commemorative Revolver 227
Buffalo Soldier Stamp 261
Bullis, Lieutenant John 9
Bullock, John 256
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) 24
Burgess, Glenn 72
Burkitt Foundation 221
Bush, President George 205, 253

C
Cage, James 193
California 1, 3, 4, 18, 19, 29, 53, 70, 88, 120, 132, 143, 158, 187, 189
Camel Corps 4, 5
Cammerer, Arno 26, 28
Camp Marfa 26
Campbell, Arthur 256
Cane, Wayne 165, 166
Canyonlands National Park 130
Capitol Reef National Monument 166
Carleton, Brigadier General James H. 6
Carlsbad Caverns National Park 137
Carmack, C.G. 45
Carpenter, Captain Louis 188
Carpenter, James M. 97-99, 218, 257
Carrico, Jim 247
Carrington, John A. 154
Carroll, Thomas B. 243, 244
Carson, Nan V. 118, 128-130, 133, 134, 176, 180, 183
Carver, John A. 89, 93, 94
Casey, Bernie 181, 225, 226
Center for Big Bend Studies 240
Center for the Study of African and Afro-American Life 233
Chapin, A.V. 49, 50, 52
Chappabitty, Frank 153
Cheri, Kevin 205, 241, 243, 244, 249, 250, 252-257
Chicano School 3
Chihuahua 2, 9, 24, 174
Chihuahuan Desert 170
Chiricahua Apaches 7
Chisos Mountains 38, 71
Church of Christ camp 84
Cinco de Mayo 24
Civil Service Commission 154
Civil War 1, 4-6, 8, 11, 15, 82, 132, 153, 176, 179, 182, 200, 232, 233
Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) 37-41
Clark, Edward 26, 98, 155, 236
Cleveland, President Grover 9
Clinton, President Bill 89, 205, 262
Coene, Ronald F. 103, 105
Cold War 53, 76
Coleman, Texas 14
Coleman, U.S. Representative Ronald 222, 243, 245-249, 251, 252
Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia 23
Colorado River 76
Colorado Volunteers 6
Colp, D.E. 38, 39
Comanches 2
Commanding Officer’s Quarters 113, 114, 123, 176, 183, 185, 194, 210, 240
Community Action Agency 136, 151
Company K, 9th Cavalry 132
Confederate States of America 5
Congressional Record 81, 82
Connally, Ernest Allen 179, 180
Connally, Governor 140, 144
Connally, U.S. Senator Tom 40, 56
Contreras, Jose 25
Cook, John 227, 236, 238, 243, 246, 252, 257
Cooperative Education Program 163, 233
Index 273

Copeland, C.W. 45
Coronado, Francisco Vasquez 2
Coronado Trail Study 244
Cotton Bowl 41
Council for the Preservation of the Last Frontier 221
Court Street 14
Crellin, Thomas N. 103-105, 114-116, 118, 134, 135, 175, 177, 178
Crisman, Bob 108, 133, 137, 140, 153, 168-170, 179, 234
Cultural Resources Preservation Crew 221
Custer Battlefield National Monument 79
Custer, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong 187

D
Daggett, Elizabeth 56
Daggett, Mr. and Mrs. Walter M. 59
Dakota Productions, Inc. 189
Dallas, Texas 140
Davidson, T. Whitfield 48-52, 56, 58
Davis Mountain Lodge 140
Davis Mountain Quilters' Guild 230
Davis Mountains Heritage Association 248
Davis Mountains Historical Society 60
Davis Mountains Resource Study 243, 247, 249-252
Davis Mountains State Parks Highway 29, 57
Davis, Jefferson 45
Davis, Junior, Sammy 186
Dayton, Donald 223
Dearborn Village 23
Denver Service Center (DSC) 119, 184
Denver, Colorado 14
Devil's Sinkhole 117
DeVoto, Bernard 76
Dewey, John 15
Diez y Seis de Septiembre 24
Dillard, Bob 217, 221
Dinges, Bruce 210
Dinosaur National Monument 76, 78
Dirks-Anderson School 21
Discover Texas Association 235
Ditmanson, Dennis 257
Index

Dixon, Eddie 227, 228
Dobie, J. Frank 19, 45
Don Quickshot of the Rio Grande 32
Donald Harper 222
Donaldson, George W. 57
Dortch, Colonel Harold 208, 209
Douglass, William B. 24, 25
Driscoll Award 261
Dumble, Theodore J. 25
Dunham, Harry L. 37, 38
Dunnagan, Robert "Bob" 103, 104, 117, 125, 129, 130, 133, 136
Dust Bowl 18, 19
Dutchover, Diedrick 5, 6

E
Eastern Museum Laboratory 141
Easton, Lieutenant Thomas 44
Ebony Magazine 225, 226
Edison Laboratory National Historic Site 136
Edwards, Frank 78
Eggenhofer, Nick 127, 128
Eighth Infantry 4
Eisenhower, President Dwight D. 71-73, 75, 76, 79, 86, 87
El Gran Apacheria 2
El Morro National Monument 232
El Paso Historical Society 80
El Paso Times 225
Enloe, George 92
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 164
Environmental Study Area (ESA) 191
Erskine, Donald J. 126
Espejo, Antonio de 2, 3
Espy, J.W. 170
Espy, Pansy 217, 221
Espy, Pansy Evans 73, 124
Everson, William K. 32, 34

F
Fair, Robert 14, 51
Faircloth, M. Tom 229
Family Circle Magazine 128, 129
Faris, Doug 246, 247, 251
Farmer, Dr. James 24, 233
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) 124
Index

Federal Centennial Commission  45
Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) 39
Federal Highway Act (1916) 19
Federal Housing Authority (FHA) 100
Fehrenbach, T.E. 11-13, 18, 20, 42, 121
First Baptist Church of Fort Davis 142
First Fort 4, 125, 130, 139, 176, 179, 184, 191, 209, 211, 225
First National Bank of Alpine 182
Fitch, Monte 168, 173
Flipper, Lieutenant Henry O. 8, 9, 20, 131, 188, 189, 209, 211, 218, 229, 261
Flower, John 162, 189
Ford, Henry 23, 154
Ford's Theatre 154
Foreman, U.S. Representative Ed 124, 136, 179, 218, 238
Fort Bliss, Texas 142
Fort Bowie 70, 74, 81
Fort Bridger 213
Fort Clatsop National Historic Site 179
Fort Concho 158, 213, 214, 253, 254
Fort Custer 181
Fort D.A. Russell 26, 27
Fort Davis Boys Camp 57
Fort Davis Bugle 190
Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce 164
Fort Davis Dispatch 19, 45, 46
Fort Davis High School 21, 22, 140
Fort Davis Historic Site Strategic Plan 261
Fort Davis Historical Society 14, 60, 61, 64, 66, 70, 72, 75, 77, 78, 84, 85, 89, 91,
95, 111, 123, 127, 129, 134, 144, 177, 183, 189, 193, 194, 195, 214, 240
Fort Davis Lions Club 48
Fort Davis National Historic Site 1, 10, 12, 14, 22, 53, 55, 80, 81, 83, 85, 93, 103,
142, 143, 161, 162, 165, 169, 177, 205, 213, 225, 236, 247, 261
Fort Davis School Board 136
Fort Davis State Bank 29, 31
Fort Davis, Texas 2, 7, 15, 51, 103, 130
Fort Hays State College 160, 192
Fort Keogh 181
Fort Laramie National Historical Site 182
Fort Larned National Historic Site 192
Fort Ligonier 74, 75
Fort Ligonier Days 75
Fort Pena Colorado 43
Fort Quitman 9
Fort Richardson 213
Fort Scott National Historic Site 240
Fort Sill, Oklahoma 8, 126, 187
Fort Stockton, Texas 233, 235
Fort Thomas, Kentucky 34
Fort Union, New Mexico 70
Fort Worth Star-Telegram 43, 72, 73, 81
Frederick Jackson Turner 10, 12
Freeman Tilden Award 228
Friends of Fort Davis 214, 241, 261
Friery, Carl 257
From Retreat to Tattoo 252
Frontier thesis 10
Fugit, Judge Gerald 89
Fulton, Dr. William 126

G
Galveston, Texas 14
Garcia, Joe 201
Garner, John Nance, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives 40, 44, 45
Garrison Gold Award 236, 238, 240, 252
Garrison, Lemuel "Lon" 236
Gearhart, Ben 248, 249
Geisinger, D.W. 101, 103, 105
General American Oil Company 221
General Daniel ‘Chappie’ James Jr. School 228
General Land Office (GLO) 24
Geronimo 7, 9
Giant 140, 187
Gila Cliff Dwellings 244
Gila Wilderness 222
Gilded Age 23
Girl Scouts 230
Glacier-to-Gulf Trail
Glasscock, Lee 33
Godfrey, Sally 59
Gomez, Arthur R. 41, 43, 254
Graf, Duane 186
Gramm, U.S. Senator Phil 248
Grand Canyon National Park 29, 142, 151, 158, 188
Gray, Tom 136
Great Depression 17, 18, 23, 34, 36, 151, 214
Great Lakes 12, 53
Great Sand Dunes National Monument 195
Green, Rayna 1, 37, 44, 45
Index

Greene, Jerome 232
Grierson, Colonel Benjamin 7-9, 120
Grierson, George 25
Grierson, Junior, Benjamin 25
Griffin, Major General L.S. 126
Guadalupe Mission 3
Guadalupe Mountains 170
Guadalupe Mountains National Park 34
Gumbel, Bryant 236
Guns and Ammo 227
Guyler, Robert L. 100
Guzzardi, Rodolfo 79, 88, 90
Gwaltney, William "Bill" 219-221, 223, 225-229, 233

H
Haley, Alex 238
Hambly, Derek O. 147, 148, 159-171, 173, 174, 181, 183, 184, 195-198, 200-202, 204
Hamilton, Tom 45, 49-51
Hanchey, Mrs. J.A. 222
Haneman, William 198, 199
Hardeman, Dorsey 155, 156
Harmon, Elaine 254, 257
Harper's Magazine 76
Harpers Ferry Center (HFC) 185
Harriman, Clifford 170
Harrison, Dudley 251, 252
Harry S Truman Library 158
Hart, William S. 32
Harte, Houston 248
Harte Ranch 248
Hartzog, George 140, 142, 146, 151
Havens, William 26, 28
Head Start Program 136
Heine, Cornelius 141, 142
Hendryx, Gene 31, 73, 77, 90, 92, 132, 137, 139, 142, 250, 251
Herrera, Pedro 25
Hershenson, Harry G. 26, 28
Hiawatha Pageant 24
Highland Chamber of Commerce 89
Hildebrand, Frank 186
Hill, Sanford 97, 98, 134
Hispanic Awareness Week 239
Historic American Buildings Survey Act (1933) 42
Historic Tree Management Plan 239
Historical and Scientific Society Museum 45
Historical Sites Advisory Committee 72
Historical Society of New Mexico 80
Hitzman, Judith 218, 236
HJS Productions 190, 191
Hogan, William 46, 47
Holland, Junior, F. Ross 184, 185
Holloman Air Force Base 164, 208
Hollywood, California 186-189, 201, 225
Homestead National Monument 98
Hoover, President Herbert 34, 36
Hornback, Kenneth 202, 203
Hospital Canyon 48, 57, 84, 101, 117, 125, 137, 169, 257
Hot Wells Ranch 124
Hotel Limpia 19, 133
Houston Magazine 56, 57
Howard University 209, 219, 220
Hoxie, Jack 32-34
Hoxie’s Stockade 33
Hubbell Trading Post 232
Hudspeth County, Texas 28
Hudspeth, U.S. Representative Claude 28, 29
Hunter, Marvin 46

I
Illinois State Historical Library 120, 121
Independence Day 18, 23, 194
Indian Emily 44, 57, 73, 75, 79, 81, 86, 88, 130, 138, 155-157, 162
Indian Lodge 37-41, 52, 54, 58
Indian Territory 7, 8
Indian Youth Program 153
Institute of Texan Cultures 213
Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 75
Interstate 20 3
Ivey, James E. 254

J
Jackson, Earl 130, 193
Jackson, John C. 58-60, 77, 78, 84, 85, 88, 89, 91, 94, 95, 117
Jackson, Sara Dunlap 131, 217, 221
Jacobsen, Lucy Miller 13, 14, 19, 21-24, 26, 29, 31, 34, 37, 38, 54, 55, 57-59, 73, 74
James, John 4, 6, 25, 32, 33, 45, 48-50, 56, 97, 98, 117, 160, 193, 206-208, 213, 221,
225-228, 233
Jamestown Colony 44
Index

Janes, Mrs. Susan M. 25
Jazz Age 16
Jeff Davis County Democratic party 86
Jefferson, Thomas 4, 23, 45, 50, 221
Jemez Pueblo 238
Jenkins, John W. 126, 127
Jesse Evans Gang 8
Job Corps 136
John Birch Society 88
Johnson, Jerry 29
Johnson, Lyndon B. 71, 72, 76, 80, 81, 86-89, 93, 135, 139
Johnson, Mrs. Lyndon B. (Lady Bird) 76, 93, 140
Jones, Frank 33
Jones, J.L. 24
Jones, Landon 53, 54, 193
Joseph, Stanley C. 87, 88, 92, 171, 190, 191, 210, 244, 250
Julian, Victor 142, 223, 225
Jumanos 2
Juneteenth celebration 233

K
Kammen, Michael 22, 23, 31, 36, 41, 42, 54, 76, 93, 148, 167
Kane, Randy 253
Keesey Canyon 38
Kelley, Ellen 219
Kennedy, President John F. 48, 82, 86-88, 90-92, 140, 143, 181, 234
Kennedy, U.S. Senator Robert 181
King, Junior, Dr. Martin Luther 181
Koch, Etta 99, 104
Kochenour, Keith 225
Kowski, Frank 178, 182, 191
Ku Klux Klan 16
KVLF 31, 59, 73, 90

L
La Limpia 5
La Raza 3
Lacy, Chris 249
LaFleur, Harold 184
Lake Meredith 164
Lancaster, Burt 188
Land and Water Conservation Fund 143
Lane Theological Seminary 14
Langellier, Dr. John 217
Laughlin, Tom 188
Leckie, Dr. William 188, 189, 217, 238
Lee, Captain Arthur T. 33, 43, 130
Levy, Benjamin 119, 136, 138, 166, 176, 177, 179, 180, 212, 213, 225, 249, 250
Liddell, Suzanne 257
Limpia Canyon 1, 2, 4, 44
Limpia Creek 2, 8-10, 33, 169
Lions Club 48, 136
Lipan Apache 2
Lissimore, John Troy 154
Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument 79, 160
Littleton, John O. 63, 72, 84
Lone Star state 11, 12, 18, 42, 43, 121, 143, 226, 231, 246, 256
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth 24
Lopez de Santa Ana, Antonio 3
Lotspeich, Ben 57
Lou Reda Production Company 261
Love, Dorothy 47-50
Love, Jim Tom 52, 124, 125
Love, State Senator Thomnas 29, 31
Lovejoy, Dr. E.M.P. 172
Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park 236

M
MacColl, Ray O. 229
Maier, Herbert 37-41
Maintenance Management System Award 256
Mang, Fred 201
Mangum, Neil 250, 251
Mann, Simpson 131
Manuel Musquiz ranch 44
Marathon (TX) Historical Society 125
Marathon, Texas 42
Marcy, Captain William Randolph 3
Marfa Air Base 54
Marfa, Texas 89
Mariscal Canyon 140
Marquez, Texas 25
Martin, Stephen 77, 78, 89-92, 181, 234, 253
Masland, Frank 94, 95
Mather Training Center 129, 209, 236
Mays, Lieutenant Ruben 6
MCA-Universal Studios 188
Index

McCready, R.D. 60, 91
McCurdy, Charles 212
McDonald Observatory 37, 46, 52, 164, 168, 173, 174, 245, 250, 255, 261
McDonald, William Johnson 29
McKay, Douglas 78, 79
McSwain, Ross 248
Meadows, Algur 221
Meadows Foundation 221
Meeks, W.O. 45
Men of the Tenth 190
Mentzer, Frank 162
Merrill, Flora 60
Merrill, G. Martin 78, 89-92, 234
Merrill George 60
Merrill, J.W. 40
Merritt, Lieutenant Colonel Wesley 6
Mescalero Apaches 5, 6, 202
Mexicans 17, 20, 21, 222
Mexico 1-9, 13-15, 20, 21, 45, 47, 59, 70, 80, 89, 120, 122, 123, 148, 153, 158, 164-167, 174, 210, 213, 219, 222, 232, 244, 249, 260
Meyer, Colonel Richard L. 165
Michener, James A. 226, 227
Michl, Colonel Joseph 190, 191
Middle East 4
Midland, Texas 100
Mile High Club 48-52, 54, 56-58, 144
Miller Brothers "101 Ranch" 32
Miller, Char 13
Miller, Clay 14, 183, 250
Miller, George W. 122, 134, 135
Miller, Lucy 13, 92, 183
Miller, Mrs. Clay Espy 32
Miller, Steve 205, 232, 236, 238-240
Millionaire's Row 14
Mills, Allen 25
Mimbres Culture Study 244
Minority Interpretation Action Plan 209
Mission 66 76, 77, 79, 109, 126, 139
Mission 76 79
Mission San Jose 58
Missouri 19, 158
Mitchell 99, 100, 125, 130
Mix, Tom 32
Moller, W.A. 50
Montezuma Castle National Monument 133
Montgomery, James 213
Moody, Governor Dan L. 31
Morales, Tommy 22
Morris, Allan 257, 261
Mott, William Penn 245, 246
Mountain States Legal Foundation 206
Mountain-Plains Museum Association (MPMA) 191
Mt. Mitre 57
Mulhern, Charles 24
Munoz-Sun Hardware Store 181
Museum News 191

N
Nana 8
Nash, Gerald D. 13, 53
Nason, George 39-41
National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) 26
National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) 254
National Indian Wars Veterans 131
National Park Foundation 260
National Park Service 1, 2, 8, 12, 26, 28, 41, 42, 52, 53, 62, 71, 74, 91, 92, 123, 138,
139, 142, 143, 147, 161, 165, 195, 209, 210, 222, 226, 233, 238, 246, 248,
249, 251, 252, 254, 262
National Park Service Appreciation Award 195
National Park Service Honorary Park Ranger Award 161
National Trust for Historic Preservation 235, 236
National Youth Corps (NYC) 136
Navajo National Monument 232
Navarro, Captain Angel 6
NBC Today Show 236
Neasham, Aubrey 51, 52, 70
Nebraska 29, 53, 78, 98, 118
Nebraska Educational Television Network (NETN) 189
Neff, Pat 50
Negbaur, Jane E. 128, 129
Nelson, Dr. James T. 208
Nelson, Ray 152, 153
New Deal 23, 36, 37, 41, 42, 53, 54, 75
New Mexico 2, 3, 5, 6, 13, 14, 21, 45, 59, 70, 80, 89, 122, 123, 153, 164, 165, 166,
210, 213, 222, 232, 244, 249, 260
New Mexico Historical Review 80
New York 12, 17, 23, 33, 45, 54, 129, 130, 220, 227, 228, 232
Newberry Library 130
Newkirk, Dr. Robert F. 211, 212
Newman, Paul 188
Newman, Tom 77
Nichols, Robert F. 203, 204
Ninth Cavalry 6
Nixon, President Richard M. 160, 194
Nobles, Joan Stock 248
Nored, Mildred Bloys 13, 14, 19, 21-24, 26, 29, 31, 34, 37, 38, 54, 55, 57-59, 73, 74
North Platte River 72
North Ridge Nature Trail 191
NPS Advisory Board 74, 80
NPS Albright Fellowship Program 239
NPS Office of Archeology and Conservation 77, 161, 179
NPS Office of Buildings and Reservations 38
NPS State Park Division 38, 39, 43

O
O’Daniel, Governor W. Lee “Pappy” 43
Odessa Junior College 75
Office of Indian Affairs 7
Office of Land and Water Rights 169, 170
Officers’ Row 34, 57, 63, 67, 69, 97, 100, 114-116, 175, 184, 185, 253
Old Fort Davis Association 77
Old Fort Davis Company 56, 57, 73
Old Fort Davis Riding Stables 57
Old Overland Trail 70
Olivas, Alejandro 160
Onate, Don Juan de 3
Operations Study Team 151
Order of the Indian Wars 217
Oregon 79
Overland Trail 70, 177, 211

P
Pacific Far West Pictures Corporation 33
Pacific Northwest 20
Pacific Railway Surveys (1853) 4
Paige, Lieutenant General Emmitt 236
Painted Comanche Camp 4
Palmer, Tom 250
Palo Duro Canyon 34
Panic of 1893 14
Park Rehabilitation and Improvement Program (PRIP) 218
Parr, Walter 151
Paso Del Norte Gun Show 225
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii 52
Pecos River 2, 3
Pelham, Georgia 229
Permian Basin 198, 260
Perry, Milton 157, 158
Peru 3
Peterson, Harold 126, 152, 177-179, 182
Pierce, J.E. 33
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 74
Pocahontas Perplex 44, 45
Poitier, Sidney 188, 225, 226
Pope, Charley 97, 98, 100, 116, 134
Post Chapel 8, 10, 114, 116, 127, 218
Post Surgeon's Quarters 128
Post Trader's Store 222
Powhatan 44
Prather, Vance 34, 36
Preservation Fort Davis 257
Presidio, Texas 101
Price, Jackson E. 49, 50, 56, 72, 75, 78, 85, 91, 122, 123, 135, 169, 172, 189, 253
Priehs, Timothy J. 235
Prince Alexis of Russia 48
Princeton University 59
Proctor, Redfield 10, 11, 262, 263
Promontory Point, Utah 82
Prude Guest Ranch 92
Prude Ranch Environmental Education Center 255
Prude, John 13, 22
Prueitt, William 14
Pueblos 2

Q
Quartermaster Corral 114, 115, 127, 177, 179

R
Raht, Carlyle 11, 15, 19-22, 44, 48, 76, 86, 89, 132, 146
Random House Publishers 227
Razo, Juan 59
Razo, Richard 149, 159
Readers' Digest 186
Reagan, President Ronald 205-207, 222, 236
Rector, Pennsylvania 91
Red, White, and Black 190
Index

Reed, Erik 83, 84, 94
Region III 40, 41, 46, 47, 51, 61, 70-72, 74, 98
Reichert, Roland 84
Remington, Frederic 125, 209
Republic of Mexico 3
Revels 225
Richardson, Elmo 75, 76, 79, 213
Richert, Roland 84, 177, 178
Rickey, Junior, Donald 131, 180, 181, 183
Riddell, Jerry A. 100, 101, 116, 128, 133
Rio Concho 3
Rio Grande 3, 4, 7, 13, 32, 40, 43, 71, 140, 143, 158
Rittenhouse, Jack 122
Roaring 20s 16
Robber Barons 23
Rochester (NY) Museum of Arts and Sciences 130
Rockefeller, John D. 23, 31
Rocky Mountain National Park 36
Rocky Mountains 4
Rogers, Jerry 119, 127, 130, 132-134
Rogers, Peggy 127
Romero, Marie 238
Ronquillo, Lieutenant Colonel Jose 3
Roof Builders, Inc. 218
Roosevelt, President Franklin D. 36, 37, 42, 53
Roosevelt, President Theodore 24
Ross, Mrs. R.G. 43, 52, 57, 74, 77, 90, 117, 152, 158, 163, 177, 184, 185, 191, 208,
209, 213, 228, 229, 233, 240, 248, 256
Rothrock, H.E. 42, 43
Runte, Alfred 28, 29, 36
Russell, Ralph 117
Rutherford, U.S. Representative J.T. 75, 77, 78, 80-82, 86-92, 154, 155
Ryan, Junior, F.H. 144, 146

S
Sagebrush Rebellion 206
San Angelo Civic Theatre 60
San Angelo Standard Times 88, 90
San Antonio Express 19, 57
San Antonio Missions National Historical Park 254
San Antonio-El Paso Road 4, 6
San Carlos, Arizona 7
San Jose Mission National Historic Site 61
Sanchez, Jose 251
Sanchez, Joseph 210, 244
Sanders, Charles 225, 226
Sandidge, William 231, 232
Sanford Reservoir 186
Santa Fe, New Mexico 14
Saunders, Kenneth 83, 84
Scenic Loop 29, 31, 32, 36, 37, 40, 47, 57, 173
Schaafsma, Harold 195
Scheier, Dale 238, 239, 243, 255, 256
Schreyvogel, Charles 125
Schroeder, Albert 196
Scobee, Barry 19-22, 29, 31, 34, 44-50, 52, 53, 56-58, 60, 61, 73-82, 86-92, 95, 96, 122, 127, 130, 132, 144, 146, 155, 156, 161, 162, 247, 262
Scobee, Katherine 19
Scoven, E.T. 82
Scudday, Ann 247, 249
Scudday, Roy 246
Seaton, Fred A. 78-80, 82, 86, 87
Seawell, Colonel Washington 5
Second World War 51, 53
Seminole Indians 7
Seminole Negro scouts 7
Shafter, Major General William ("Pecos Bill") 6
Shafter, Texas 14
Shearer, Gordon K. 58, 59
Shirland, Captain E.D. 6
Shivers, Governor Allan 61, 72
Showalter, Hal K. 100
Sibley, General Henry H. 6
Sierra Blanca (White Mountains) 2, 7
Sierra Nevada 4
Simmons, D.A. 56-62, 70, 72, 74, 75, 77, 117, 169, 246
Simmons, D.E. 56
Sleeping Lion Mountain 35, 48, 60, 222
Smith, Captain John 44
Smith, Franklin 59, 93, 116, 122-127, 130, 133-135
Smith, Herbert 73
Smith, Brevet Major General Persifor 4
Smith, Lieutenant William F. 3
Smith, Ralph 120
Smith, U.S. Representative Lamar 248
Smith, V.E. 61
Snead, Bob 229, 261
Soul Soldier 190
Index

South Padre Island National Seashore 159, 167
Southern Illinois University 219
Southwest Archeological Center (SWAC) 177, 178
Southwest Region Special Events Team 228
Southwestern Monuments Association (SWMA) 130
Southwestern National Monuments (SWNM) 76
Spanish Colonial Research Center 210
Spanish Colonization Study 244
Sproul, Dude 84, 117
Sproul, Frank 24-26, 33
Sproul, H.E. 170
Sproul, M.H. 170
Sproul, Mac 56, 85
Sproul, Miss Mary 45
Spry, William 26
Sputnik 55
St. Joseph’s Church 250
Stagecoach 11, 80, 123
Stallings, Virginia M. 93
Standard Oil Company 23
Starr, Miss Dixie 33
State of the Parks-1980 163
Steen, Charlie 157
Steinbeck, John 18
Stevenson, Governor Coke 51
Stiles, Reverend Hugh 142
Stone, Glenn E. 4, 34, 46, 71, 72, 82, 83, 88, 94, 99, 109, 129, 179, 184, 209, 239, 262
Strand, Brigadier General William 164, 165
Stratton, A. Clark 98
Strode, Woody 187, 188
Stuart, Mrs. George W. 48
Sul Ross State College 43
Sul Ross State Teachers College 57
Summer Olympic Games (1968) 148
Summer Youth Employment and Training Program (SYETP) 256
Sunbelt 54
Sutler’s Boarding House 248
Sutton, John 212-214, 219, 228, 230, 233, 236, 244, 245, 250
Swearingen, Jean 182
T
Take Pride in America Awards Program 239, 241, 244
Taylor, Elizabeth 187
Telephone Pioneers 258-260
Temple, Frank 78, 88, 90, 127, 233
Tenney, Mr. and Mrs. 57
Tenth Cavalry 187-189, 200, 221
Tenth Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers, Inc. 200
Terrazas, General Joaquin 7, 121
Texas A&M University 200, 211, 212, 255
Texas Air Control Board 164
Texas American Bank 217
Texas Archeological Awareness Week 253
Texas Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History 227, 228
Texas Big Bend Park Association 43
Texas Centennial Commission 44, 56, 79
Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife 247
Texas Editorial Association 46
Texas Education Association 255
Texas Garden Clubs 72
Texas General Land Office 246
Texas Highway Department 29
Texas Historical Commission 70, 261
Texas Historical Survey Commission 61
Texas Mounted Volunteers 6
Texas National Guard 75
Texas Parade Magazine 58
Texas Rangers 7, 8, 21
Texas Relief Commission 39
Texas Revolution 3
Texas State Historical Survey Committee 137
Texas State Legislature Subcommittee on Historic Sites 137
Texas State Parks Board 36, 39-41, 52, 58
Texas Technological College 78, 121
Texas Tourist Development Agency 186
Texas Trail System 174
Texas Western College 78, 80
The Black Frontier 189
Third Cavalry 9
Thomas, Chan 23, 29, 34, 44, 49, 52, 85, 97, 98, 101, 103, 105, 115, 120, 187, 217, 243, 244, 256
Thomason, U.S. Representative R.E. 41
Thomasville, Georgia 229
Thompson, Erwin N. 99, 104, 119, 123-125, 127, 129-133, 135, 177, 250
Thorne, Stan 190, 191
Tibbs, Michael 200, 201
Tillotson, Minor R. 61, 62, 70, 71, 74
Toll, Roger V. 36, 43, 153
Tolson, Hillory 71, 72
Tower, U.S. Senator John 51, 91
Townsend, Everett E. 46, 47, 49, 51
Trans-Pecos 1-4, 6-10, 77, 143, 144, 152-154, 158, 160, 163, 226, 243, 249, 254
Trans-Pecos Trails 143
Transcontinental Trail 47
Tres Castillos, Mexico 120
Tucson, Arizona 2, 7, 100
Tularosa Basin 165, 222
Tumacacori National Monument 95
Tuskegee Institute 209
Tuzigoot National Monument 186
Tweedy, Malcolm "Bish" 59-61, 70, 71, 74, 75, 91, 92
Twiggs, General David 5
Tyler, Texas 57

U
U.S. Air Force 164, 166, 222
U.S. Army 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 21, 26, 37, 50, 56, 126, 142, 144, 158, 231, 254, 262
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) 76
U.S. Congress 1, 86, 205
U.S. Constitution 16, 239
U.S. Department of Labor 161
U.S. Forest Service 171, 239
U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) 222
U.S. Geological Survey 124, 247
U.S. House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs 81
U.S. Military Academy 8
U.S. Military Department of Texas 5
U.S. Postal Service 229, 261
U.S. Public Health Service 103
U.S. Secret Service 140
U.S. Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs 89
U.S. Senate Military Affairs Committee 11
U.S. Seventh Cavalry 187
U.S. Signal Corps 238
Udall, Stewart 87, 139, 140, 142, 143, 146
United Nations 56
United States 2, 3, 13, 15-18, 20, 23, 28, 45, 51, 53-55, 72, 80, 81, 83, 86, 144, 152, 158, 161, 162, 187, 196, 207, 231, 238
United States Government Bureau of Parks 28
University of California 19, 132
University of California, Davis 132
University of Chicago 31
University of New Mexico 13, 122, 210
University of New Mexico Press 13, 122
University of Oklahoma 126, 153, 189, 206
University of Pennsylvania Architectural Conservation Laboratory 260
University of Texas 19, 31, 43, 172, 229, 230, 233, 245
University of Texas at Arlington 229, 230
University of Texas at El Paso 172
University of Wisconsin 10
V
Valentine Military Operations Area 165
Valentine, Texas 9, 15, 18, 55, 165, 183, 221, 222
Van Horn Wells, Texas 7
Van Orden, Jay 235, 236
Vanzant, Thomas 256
Veale, John H. 40
Victorio 7, 120, 121
Vietnam 120, 135, 144, 147, 153, 165, 207, 257
Villa, Francisco "Pancho" 21
Vipond, B.L. 28
Virgin Islands National Park 188
Vision Quest Program 235
Voll, Charles B. 179, 180
Volunteers in Parks Program (VIP) 196
W
Waco Sunday Tribune-Herald 50
Waco, Texas 50
Wade, Melvin 227, 228
Wagner, Dr. Lavern 254
Wallace, David 185
Wallace, William F. 166, 169
Walton, Dale 94
War with Mexico 1
Ward, William J. 8, 25
Warnock, Dr. Barton 117
Washington, DC 26, 28, 39, 41, 43, 45, 71, 80, 121, 142, 209, 220, 226, 228, 254
Watt, James 206
Weatherby, Jacob P. 24, 75
Webb, Melody 217
Webb, Walter Prescott 19, 43
Weed, Harry 189, 190
West Texas Council of Governments 164
West Texas Historical and Scientific Society 51, 72
West Texas Historical Association 31
Western History Association 239
Western Museum Laboratory 120, 122, 126, 141, 144
Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC) 97
Western Service Center (WSC) 172
Western Tree Crew 138
Westerners International 80
Westfall, George 88
Westward Expansion and the Extension of National Boundaries, 1830-1890 51
Wheat, Judge J.R. 61, 73
Whipple Barracks 9
White 7-10, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 33, 40, 42, 56, 73, 99, 121, 131, 132, 142, 147, 154, 155, 160, 163, 165, 166, 176, 190, 206, 209, 219, 222, 223, 244, 257
White Sands National Monument 165, 222, 257
White, U.S. Representative Richard 165
Whiteaker, R.O. 38
Whiting, Lieutenant William H.C. 3, 4
Wiesel, Daniel 8
Wiggs, Louie 59
Wilbur, Ray Lyman 34
Wilcox, H.L. 45, 46, 51
Wild Rose Pass 44, 47
Williams, Clayton 193, 194, 196, 198, 199, 202-205, 209
Williams, Mary 153, 159, 166, 211, 219, 220, 225
Williamsburg, Virginia 23
Wilson, W.A. 32, 33
Wind Cave National Park 238, 239
Winfield, H.L. 49
Wirth, Conrad 36, 38, 76, 78-82, 89, 94, 95
Withers, R.C. 45
Witten, James 25
Women’s History Week 229, 230
Woodbury, Charles 99, 103
Wooster, Robert 1, 2, 7, 8, 254, 255
World War I 15, 19-22, 26, 29
Wounded Knee, South Dakota 10
Wyoming 26, 29, 72, 118, 127, 199, 206, 213

Y
Yarborough, U.S. Senator Ralph W. 77, 78, 80, 81, 89-94, 155-157
Yarbro, Ellen 24
Yarbrough, Jerry 205, 256, 257, 260-262
Yellowstone National Park 195
Yorktown, Virginia 41
Young, Darrin 3, 10, 19, 20, 22, 37, 41, 44, 54, 59, 77, 121, 127, 136, 137, 146, 152, 162, 204, 209, 230, 235, 239, 256
Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) 161, 239
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