



# Foundation Document Overview

## Fort Davis National Historic Site

Texas



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*FORT DAVIS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, as one of the largest and most intact of the frontier forts, perpetuates and preserves historical, cultural, and natural resources while educating the public about the influence of military operations on the development and settlement of the Southwest.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Fort Davis National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

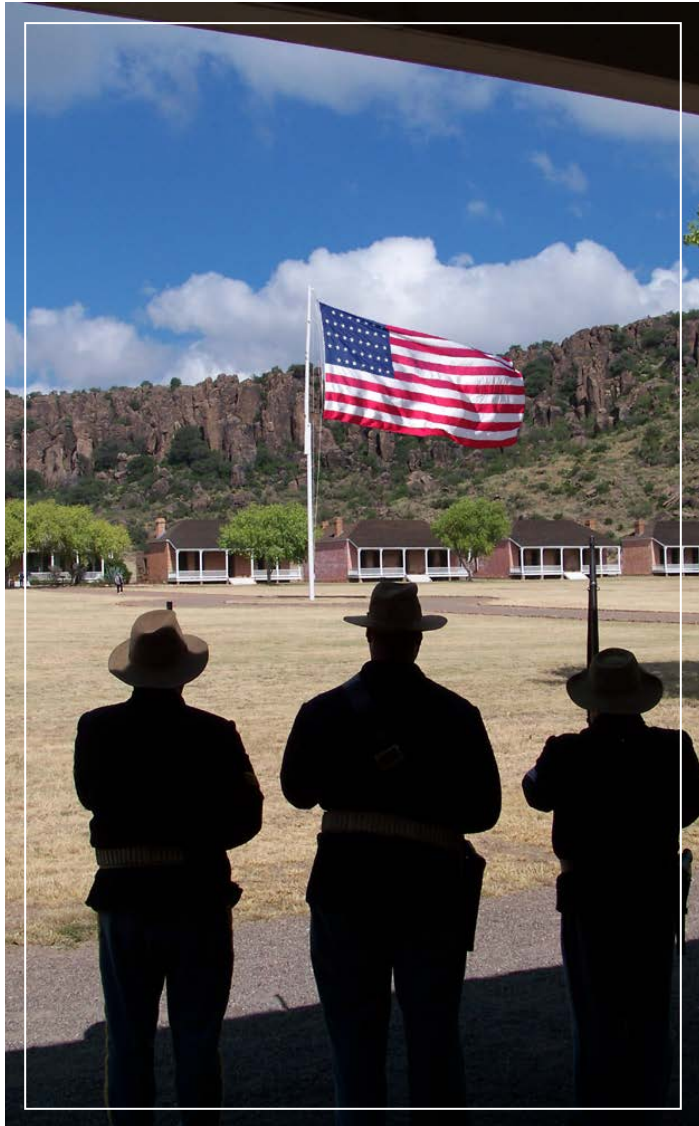
1. Fort Davis is one of the best remaining and continuously preserved examples in the Southwest of a typical post-Civil War frontier fort because of the setting and extent of the surviving structures, ruins, objects, and artifacts.
2. Black regulars, known as Buffalo Soldiers, served at Fort Davis from 1867 to 1885, providing an excellent opportunity for understanding and appreciating the important role played by African Americans in the West and specifically in the frontier army.
3. Fort Davis was strategically located to defend the Trans-Pecos portion of the San Antonio-El Paso Road and the Chihuahua Trail. This encompassed protecting and controlling activities on the southern portions of the Great Comanche War Trail and Mescalero Apache War Trails.
4. During the Indian Wars, Fort Davis provided essential troops and supplies to approximately 100 skirmishes in West Texas, and finally to the Victorio Campaign, which ended meaningful resistance of Apache bands in the Military District of the Trans-Pecos.
5. The historic integrity and character of the post-Civil War fort have not been significantly altered since its establishment. Much of the landscape immediately adjacent to the post has undergone little modern development, which helps promote an authentic visitor experience.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Historic Setting**
- **Historic Structures**
- **Curatorial Collections**
- **Opportunities to Connect History to Place**
- **San Antonio–El Paso Road**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- The history of Fort Davis, encompassing the conflict between native peoples (Apaches, Comanches, and Kiowas) and the ever-increasing flow of emigrants and settlers to the Trans-Pecos region, provides opportunities to explore the ideas of security, sovereignty, and cultural identity in the American West.
- The historical integrity of Fort Davis (including quality and quantity of original fabric, historic records and artifacts, and the cultural and natural landscape) enables a deeper understanding of the realities of frontier military and civilian life in the American West.
- The history of African American soldiers at Fort Davis is an important chapter in the larger American social movement toward equality for all citizens, a movement that continues today.





## Description

Fort Davis National Historic Site is on Texas State Highways 17/118 on the northern edge of the town of Fort Davis. It is situated at the eastern side of the rugged but majestic Davis Mountains in the area of West Texas known as the Trans-Pecos, which lies between the Pecos River and the Rio Grande. The site is approximately 200 miles southeast of El Paso, Texas, and 180/160 miles southwest of Midland/Odessa, Texas, respectively.

A key post in the defense system of West Texas, Fort Davis played a major role in the history of the Southwest. From 1854 until 1891, troops stationed at the post protected emigrants, freighters, mail coaches, and travelers on the Trans-Pecos portion of the San Antonio-El Paso Road and Chihuahua Trail. The troops sought to control activities on the southern stem of the Great Comanche War Trail and

Mescalero Apache War Trails. The fort is also important to understanding the presence of African Americans in the West and in the frontier military because the 24th and 25th U.S. Infantry and the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry, all-black regiments established after the Civil War, were stationed at the post.

Today Fort Davis is one of the best remaining examples of a frontier military post and is recognized as a national historic landmark. It is a vivid reminder of the significant role played by the military in the settlement and development of the western frontier. Protecting 24 roofed buildings and more than 100 ruins and foundations, Fort Davis National Historic Site makes this valuable part of America's heritage available to thousands of visitors annually for their enjoyment, understanding, education, and appreciation.

