

# THE MILITARY AND KANSAS HISTORY

William D. Young

## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Although most would recognize the long tradition of military history and admit to the vital role of the frontier army on the history of Kansas and the West, "many people view military history as either an enigma or an anachronism." This fact hardly is surprising, according to Bill Young, professor of history at Maple Woods Community College, as "Traditional 'boots and saddles' history was little more than myopic, ethnocentric accounts of battles and military leaders." Whether self-glorifying memoir, local tourism "history," or pulp novel, most was of poor quality and of little consequence to the historical profession.

In his thorough and effective contribution to *Kansas History's* review essay series, Professor Young surveys that traditional literature, analyzes the more recent, and suggests many areas in need of study. The ascendancy of the so-called "New Western" history has positively impacted military history scholarship in recent years, but many challenges remain for the Kansas historian. While the "new"

"So here they are. The dog faced soldiers, the regulars, the 50 cent a day professionals, riding the outposts of a nation. . . . They were all the same, men in dirty shirt blue."<sup>1</sup>

Thus ended John Ford's epic western *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, which presents what traditionally has been the popular image of the army in the West: marching, fighting, and moving from one fortified post and one campaign to another. Indeed, the military's impact on Kansas and western history is immense. The first soldiers, from Spain and France, made their way across the plains of Kansas, staking out empires and asserting exclusive trading rights with American Indians. Beginning in the early nineteenth century the United States Army continued this standard dispatching explorers, diplomats, and road builders westward—all "agents of empire Building," according to Francis Paul Prucha.<sup>2</sup>

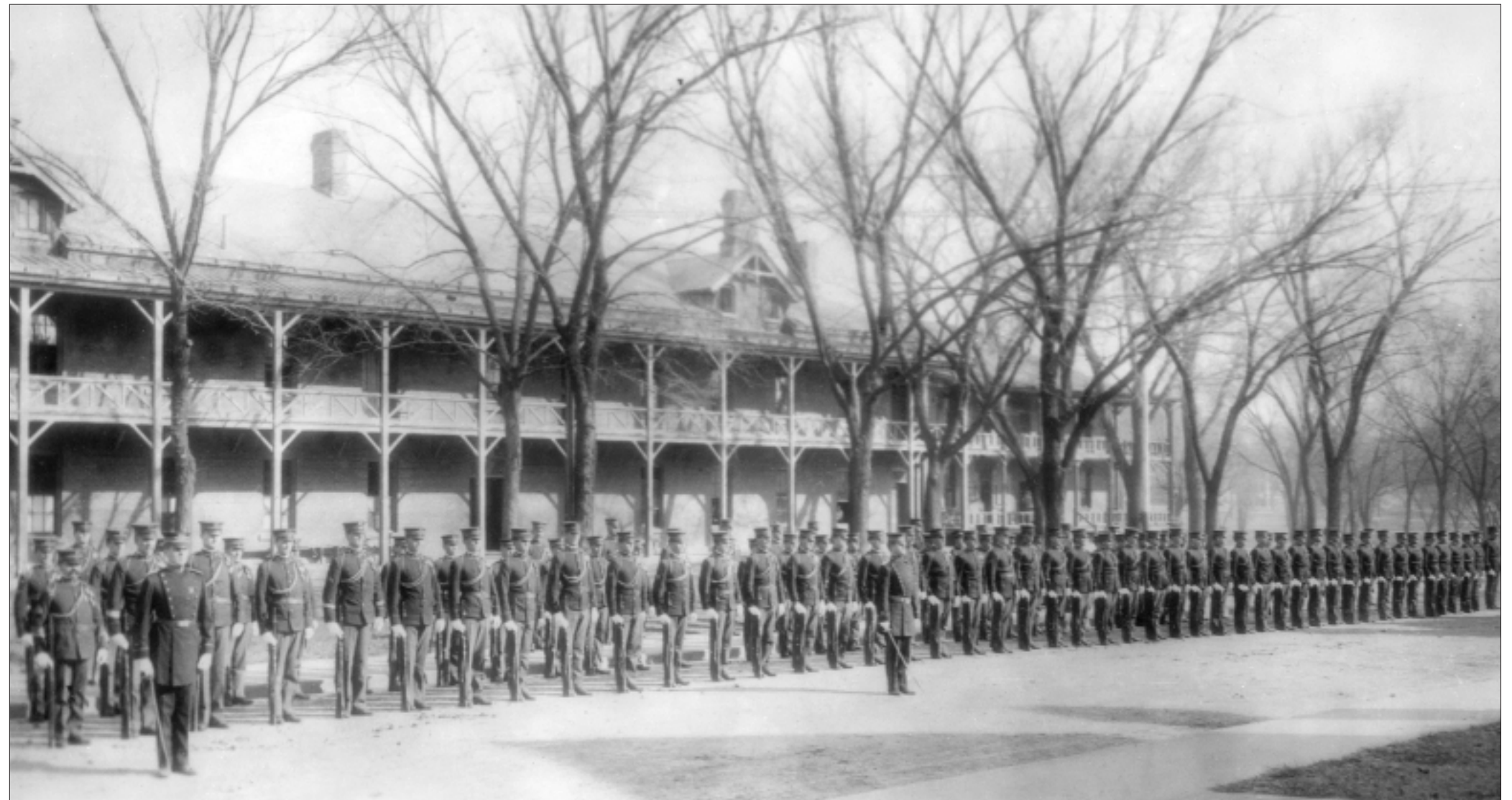
Frontier military history has existed since the first struggles between American Indians and European interlopers. The earliest accounts, even colonial Indian captivity stories, often are military based. Despite this long tradition, many people

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1. *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, RKO Pictures, 1949.

2. Francis Paul Prucha, *Broadax and Bayonet: The Role of the United States Army in the Development of the Northwest, 1815–1860* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1953), 176–77.

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Fort Leavenworth military troops, ca. 1908.

view military history as either an enigma or an anachronism. Traditional "boots and saddles" history was little more than myopic, ethnocentric accounts of battles and military leaders. In the West this meant campaigns against American Indians, told from the army's point of view, promoting the idea that the military was a tool of civilization, sweeping savage barbarians out of the way of white progress. Some of the accounts were self-glorifying, used to promote reputations, justify past actions, or refute criticisms. George Armstrong Custer's *My Life on the Plains* promotes his reputation as an "expert" Indian fighter and attacked critics of his actions during the 1868 Battle of the Washita. The volume of officers' memoirs is massive, as is

the material by local historians, antiquarians, and pulp novelists that frequently is myopic and of poor quality, intended to promote local tourism.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, much of the historical profession did not demand change or revision of standard military histories of Kansas and the West. Social historians thought mil-

3. George Armstrong Custer, *My Life on the Plains or, Personal Experiences with Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962). A sampling of other notables with Kansas connections includes Sandy Barnard, ed., *Ten Years with Custer: A 7th Cavalryman's Memoirs* (Terre Haute: AST Press, 2001); Dabney H. Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian in the Mexican, Indian and Civil Wars* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1874).



approach “debunks many myths surrounding the frontier, and examines the impact of European encroachment on minorities and the environment, the field generally ignores the role of the army in the West.”

The U.S. Army certainly did much more than fight Indians, even though this is a tragic, interesting, and important part of the story. As Young clearly demonstrates, the army was a major, if not *the* major, facilitator of westward expansion and the economic development of the West in that it was the great early purveyor of federal largess. In addition to defending the frontier and bringing a modicum of security to the region, the military establishment explored and mapped the West, aided in the construction of a transportation infrastructure, “performed constabulary duties when civilian authorities were either nonexistent or incompetent,” established forts that became “centers of cultural exchange,” and distributed federal funds in the form of civilian contracts and even direct relief in times of distress, as well as providing much needed medical care for everything from baby delivery to fighting epidemic disease.

As always, the editors hope this fine contribution to the review essay series will interest many of our readers and stimulate new scholarship. Professor Young perceptively suggests many trails this research might follow and concludes “Only when we finish painting the picture of Kansas and the military will we succeed in making our history comprehensive and inclusive, closer to the reality of our human existence.”

Virgil W. Dean  
Kansas State Historical Society  
Rita G. Napier  
University of Kansas

itary history was irrelevant, and those seeking a global or comparative approach believed studying the American frontier was too isolated. As Jim Leiker so poignantly noted, while the “New Western” history debunks many myths surrounding the frontier, and examines the impact of European encroachment on minorities and the environment, the field generally ignores the role of the army in the West.<sup>4</sup>

Paul Prucha sounded the bugle call for change in 1953 with his *Broadax and Bayonet*, in which he demonstrated that soldiers served not only as warriors, diplomats, and protectors of civilian settlers, but also built roads and opened transportation routes, conducted crop experiments, served as a frontier constabulary, and attracted settlers to budding community centers. William Goetzmann expanded Prucha’s thesis across the Mississippi River, focusing on the role of the military in exploration and on the contributions of the Corps of Topographical Engineers in particular. Scholars documented how army engineers and work crews followed up the explorers, constructing wagon roads for military use, marking river fords, and building bridges. Settlers and teamsters quickly took advantage of the opportunities presented by this nineteenth-century federal road-building program.<sup>5</sup>

In 1980 historian Michael Tate reinforced Prucha’s 1953 thesis and called for specific research demonstrating the relationship between military dollars and frontier economies. Federal monies spent constructing and maintaining the western forts attracted settlement and fueled commercial development.<sup>6</sup> Robert Wooster’s examination of Fort Davis, Texas; Frank Schubert’s study of Fort Robinson, Nebraska; and William Dobak’s superb work on Fort Riley, Kansas, clearly demonstrate the range of military/commercial interrelationships at individual frontier posts. Because of these and other studies, most western and military historians concur with Tate that the United States Army was the national government’s primary agent in continental expansion.<sup>7</sup>

But how do these historical arguments apply to Kansas? During the nineteenth century Kansas was the crossroads of the continent, where different cultural groups met, interacted, and sometimes clashed violently. Roads to the riches of Santa Fe, to gold discoveries in California and Colorado, and to productive farmland all crossed Kansas. They also crossed the homes of thousands of Amer-

4. James N. Leiker, “Black Soldiers at Fort Hays, Kansas, 1867–1869: A Study in Civilian and Military Violence,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 17 (Winter 1997): 3–17.

5. Paul Prucha, *The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783–1846* (New York: Macmillan, 1969); William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803–1863* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959); Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966). The best general accounts available on the role of army engineers and the road-building projects are Frank N. Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion: Army Engineers in the Trans-Mississippi West* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1980); W. Turrentine Jackson, *Wagon Roads West: A Study of Federal Road Surveys and Construction in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1846–1869* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

6. Michael L. Tate, “The Multi-Purpose Army on the Frontier: A Call for Further Research,” in *The American West: Essays in Honor of W. Eugene Hollon*, ed. Ronald Lora (Toledo, Ohio: University of Toledo Press, 1980); Robert Frazer, *Forts of the West: Military Forts and Presidios and Posts Commonly Called Forts West of the Mississippi River to 1898* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965); Robert G. Athearn, *Forts of the Upper Mississippi* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1967).

7. Robert Wooster, *Fort Davis: Outpost on the Texas Frontier* (Austin: Texas State Historical Assn., 1994); Frank N. Schubert, *Buffalo Soldiers, Braves, and the Brass: The Story of Fort Robinson, Nebraska* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing, 1993); William A. Dobak, *Fort Riley and Its Neighbors: Military Money and Economic Growth, 1853–1895* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998); Michael L. Tate, *The Frontier Army in the Settlement of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).

ican Indians, whose hunting grounds, timber, and water supplies were threatened by the newcomers. The growing threat of hostilities brought an expanded military presence to Kansas. The missions of the military in nineteenth-century Kansas were to preserve the peace with American Indians if possible, protect the settlers, the roads, and the travelers using them, and if necessary use armed force against the Indian inhabitants of the plains. Every change in government policy, each national crisis impacted the military’s role in Kansas. When the twentieth and twenty-first centuries arrived, the military’s missions changed, but its economic and cultural importance to Kansas did not.

#### FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE

To most observers, military history is supposed to discuss combat, the development and use of weapons, tactics, and strategy. Troops were trained and organized into regiments in Kansas’s forts, and they participated in virtually every major campaign on the plains during the nineteenth century. The military fulfilled its missions, served as warrior, diplomat, and conqueror—all with limited funds, manpower, and inconsistent government support.

In 1827 Colonel Henry Leavenworth established Cantonment (later Fort) Leavenworth, the first United States military outpost and first permanent white settlement in what would become Kansas. Most historians agree that the military established forts across Kansas to protect travel routes for their supplies and other commerce. Fort Scott, established in 1842, protected the military road along the “permanent Indian frontier” on the western edge of Missouri. In 1853 Fort Riley started its tasks of protecting travelers along the Santa Fe, Oregon, and later Smoky Hill Trails. Fort Larned/Camp Alert (1859), Fort Ellsworth/Harker (1864), Fort Zarah (1864), and Fort Dodge (1865) were established to protect the Santa Fe Trail. To guard the Smoky Hill route the army built Fort Kirwan (1865), Fort Hays (1865), and Camp Pond Creek/Fort Wallace (1865).<sup>8</sup> “Pacifying the frontier” meant fighting American Indians. Most early accounts of conflict on the plains

8. For brief, readable histories of most of these facilities, see the *Kansas Forts Series*, published in Topeka by the Kansas State Historical Society. Prominent Kansas historian Leo Oliva contributed *Fort Scott: Courage and Conflict on the Border* (1996); *Fort Larned: Guardian of the Santa Fe Trail* (1996); *Fort Hays: Keeping Peace on the Plains* (1996); *Fort Wallace: Sentinel on the Smoky Hill Trail* (1998); *Fort Dodge: Sentry of the Western Plains* (1998); and *Fort Harker: Defending the Journey West* (2000). The other two books in the series are William McKale and William D. Young, *Fort Riley: Citadel of the Frontier West* (2000), and J. Patrick Hughes, *Fort Leavenworth: Gateway to the West* (2000). Older studies of Fort Leavenworth are Elvid Hunt, *History of Fort Leavenworth 1827–1937*, 2d ed. (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Command and General Staff School Press, 1937); George H. Walton, *Sentinel of the Plains: Fort Leavenworth and the American West* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1973). The old standard for Fort Riley is Woodbury F. Pride, *The History of Fort Riley* (Fort Riley, Kans.: Cavalry School, Book Department, 1926).



The growing threat of Indian hostilities in the West brought an expanded military presence to nineteenth-century Kansas. This Harper’s Weekly illustration depicts General Phil Sheridan and troops departing from Fort Hays to engage in the 1868 winter campaign against the Plains Indians.



## The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890

Robert M. Utley



The finest general histories of the United States military in the West come from the pen of Robert Utley. Following his first two works, *Frontiersmen in Blue* and *Frontier Regulars*, his third major contribution, *The Indian Frontier of the American West*, was published in 1984.

echoed common themes: “blood-thirsty savages” who committed “outrages” against white women, barbarians blocking the westward movement of civilization, which took the form of miners, ranchers, farmers, and other settlers. Early scholarly literature reflected these themes, accounts always told from the white perspective. Fairfax Downey wrote of the *Indian-Fighting Army*, while Rupert Richardson and Lonnie White described how the army destroyed the Comanche and Cheyenne “barriers” to settlement.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Fairfax Downey, *Indian Fighting Army* (New York: Harper and Row, 1941); Rupert N. Richardson, *The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clarke, 1933); Lonnie White, “The Cheyenne Barrier on the Kansas Frontier, 1868–1869,” *Arizona and the West* 4 (Spring 1962): 51–64.

10. Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848–1865* (New York: Macmillan, 1967); *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866–1891* (New York: Macmillan, 1973); Robert Wooster, *The Military and United States Indian Policy, 1865–1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). Donald L. Fixico reinforces the link between changing government policies and military action in “American Indians in Kansas: Review Essay,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 26 (Winter 2003–2004): 272–87. For a detailed but already dated listing of the research and publications in this field, see Joseph G. Dawson III, *The Late 19th Century U.S. Army, 1865–1898: A Research Guide* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1990).

11. Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1848–1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); William B. Skelton, *An American Profession At Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784–1861* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992); Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784–1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

*Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay*. More than 75 percent of this book looks at life at the army post, from food and lodgings to education and entertainment. More recently, Durwood Ball reexamined the antebellum frontier army in *Army Regulars on the Western Frontier, 1848–1861* and found an officer corps and army politically divided. His book also focuses on the army’s constabulary duties in the West, rather than Indian fighting.<sup>12</sup>

In Kansas, the military spent little time actually campaigning and even less in combat. In his personal diary Lieutenant J.E.B. Stuart described a typical campaign, reporting hunts and “a fine roast of buffalo,” an abundance of quail, deer, antelope, and prairie dogs, but routinely “saw no trace today of Indians.” Chasing hostiles was safer duty than escorting stagecoaches or guarding isolated stage stations miles away from any support.<sup>13</sup>

The largest antebellum campaign in Kansas was Colonel Edwin V. “Bull” Sumner’s 1857 punitive expedition against the Cheyennes. Lieutenant Stuart and dragoon-turned-wagon master P. G. Lowe described a campaign plagued by incompetent guides, where men and animals alike suffered for lack of water.<sup>14</sup> Historians dispute the effectiveness of Sumner’s campaign. Robert Utley believed Sumner’s actions temporarily humbled the Cheyennes and established peace, but more recent studies by William Chalfant and Elliott West show the campaign increased Cheyenne resistance.<sup>15</sup>

During the Civil War most regular army troops in Kansas were replaced with volunteer regiments from the North. Loyal Unionist Indians from Oklahoma and more than two thousand African Americans were part of the twenty-three regiments and four artillery batteries that Kansas contributed. The Kansas volunteers believed their mission was to take the war to Missouri and punish Missourians for their pre-war activities. James H. Lane and Charles R. Jennison raised new regiments of volunteers, enlisting many of the same individuals who raided with them before the war.<sup>16</sup>

12. Don Rickey Jr., *Forty Miles a Day On Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars, 1848–1861* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963); Durwood Ball, *Army Regulars on the Western Frontier, 1848–1861* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001).

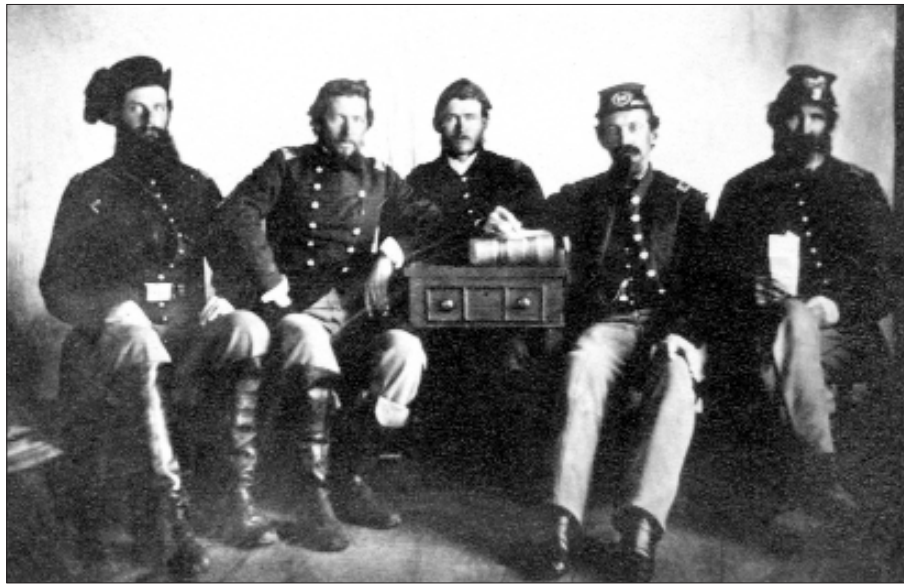
13. W. Stitt Robinson, ed., “The Kiowa and Comanche Campaign of 1860 as Recorded in the Personal Diary of Lt. J.E.B. Stuart,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 23 (Winter 1957): 382–400; Oliva, *Fort Harker*, 63–63; Oliva, *Fort Dodge*, 49.

14. Stuart was shot in the chest while chasing down a Cheyenne warrior. His account is in Theo F. Rodenbough and William L. Haskin, eds., *The Army of the United States* (New York: G.W. Dillingham, 1896). Percival G. Lowe, *Five Years a Dragoon (1849–1854) and Other Adventures on the Great Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965).

15. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 121–25; William Y. Chalfant, *Cheyennes and Horse Soldiers: The 1857 Expedition and the Battle of Solomon’s Fork* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989); Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

16. Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 70–78; see also Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History* (New York: Praeger, 1974); Michael Lee Lanning, *The African American Soldier: From Crispus Attucks to Colin Powell* (Secaucus, N.J.: Carol Publishing Group, 1997); Roger D. Cunningham, “Welcoming ‘Pa’ on the Kaw: Kansas’s Colored Militia and the 1864 Price Raid,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 25 (Summer 2002): 86–101. Stephen Z. Starr, *Jennison’s Jayhawkers: A Civil War Cavalry Regiment and Its Commander* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973); S. M. Fox, “The Story of the Seventh Kansas,” *Kansas Historical Collections, 1903–1904* 8 (1904): 13–49; Albert Castel, *Civil War Kansas: Reaping the Whirlwind* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 56–61.

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Kansas contributed twenty-three regiments and four artillery batteries to the Union cause during the Civil War. The soldiers depicted here are members of the Eleventh Kansas Cavalry.

Historians provide no consensus about how to examine the contributions of Kansas during the Civil War. They agree that the battle of Mine Creek, October 25, 1864, was the largest clash between uniformed soldiers on Kansas soil. But Albert Castel, Alvin M. Josephy, and Jay Monaghan disagreed on how to define the western theatre of action, whether Bleeding Kansas caused the Civil War, when the Civil War in the West actually began, how local Kansas politics affected the struggle, or the actual military importance of Kansas in the conflict.<sup>17</sup> Historians need a volume that looks at the complete picture of Civil War Kansas, border raids, uniformed conflicts, and army-Indian struggles, a book demonstrating how these are interrelated. With manpower stretched thin, it was hard to fulfill antebellum missions of protecting settlers and the trails while patrolling the border for raiders and sending troops to fight Confederate forces. The strain and

tension of abundant problems affected Kansas's politics and development and is a story deserving to be told.

On the western plains, Kansas volunteers believed the regulars had been "soft" on the Indians and felt they could remove all obstacles to settlement by ending the "Indian problem" once and for all—by eliminating the cause, the Plains Indians. Increasing Indian attacks on wagons and stage lines in April 1864 caused General Samuel R. Curtis to send cavalry reinforcements from Fort Riley to the garrison at Fort Larned to augment escorts and keep the trails open. In response, General Curtis established two new posts, Forts Zarah and Ellsworth/Harker, to protect the lines of communication and movement on the military road between Fort Riley and Fort Larned. On September 25, 1864, General James G. Blunt's men discovered a large camp of Arapahos and Cheyennes about seventy-five miles northwest of Fort Larned. Blunt drove them away from their camps, destroyed their supplies, and futilely chased them for two days until his horses gave out.<sup>18</sup>

Following the Civil War the military in Kansas focused mainly on removing the American Indian "obstruction" to expansion and settlement. Robert Utley's books include several chapters that specifically target events affecting Kansas,

17. Albert Castel, *General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 238–55; Alvin M. Josephy Jr., *The Civil War in the American West* (New York: Random House, 1991), 382–85; Jay Monaghan, *Civil War on the Western Border, 1854–1865* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 338–39.

18. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 288–90; McKale and Young, *Fort Riley*, 54–56; Oliva, *Fort Larned*, 20–21; Oliva, *Fort Harker*, 23–24. General Curtis's son Zarah, a major in the United States Army, was killed by William Quantrill's Confederate guerrillas at Baxter Springs in October 1863, and the general named the fort in his memory.

such as the Hancock campaign of 1867. Paul Hutton's *Phil Sheridan and His Army* concentrates on Sheridan's role in post-Civil War Indian campaigns, including the winter campaign of 1868. Chapter six provides a useful evaluation of other career officers who fought in the West.<sup>19</sup> Four articles by Marvin H. Garfield discuss the concept of "frontier defense," and all assume that the military needed to respond after Indian attacks and outrages. Two books, one by Craig Miner and William Unrau and the other by Miner alone, illuminate white-Indian relationships in Kansas. *The End of Indian Kansas: A Study of Cultural Revolution, 1854–1871* examines the relationship between the white man's land greed and paranoia and the demand for a military solution to the "Indian problem." *West of Wichita: Settling the High Plains of Kansas, 1865–1890* details armed clashes, attacks, and depredations in the western half of Kansas from the white perspective.<sup>20</sup> Readers also may piece together the story of Kansas's Indian wars by reading all eight volumes in the aforementioned *Kansas Forts Series*.

Numerous personal accounts, memoirs, and diaries detail military life and actions on the plains after the Civil War. Isaac Coates's journal focuses on the key events and personalities involved in "Hancock's War." Correspondence between Captain Albert Barnitz and his wife, Jennie, offers insights on fort life as well as on the Seventh Cavalry. George A. Armes's memoirs discuss combat, life, and army politics at Forts Hays and Harker.<sup>21</sup>

Currently no single book provides a complete picture of the struggle between American Indians and the military inside Kansas and how this relates to the greater struggle across the West. Kansas's forts served as staging grounds for other major campaigns that impacted the settlement of the state. In 1845 Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny led 280 dragoons from Forts Leavenworth and Scott on a circular march to South Pass, Bent's Fort, Colorado, and back home again. The purpose of this march was not only to impress natives with American military force and protect emigrants on the Oregon Trail, but it was to impress Great Britain with the availability of United States military forces in the event an armed struggle broke out over Oregon. When the Mexican War began in May 1846 Fort

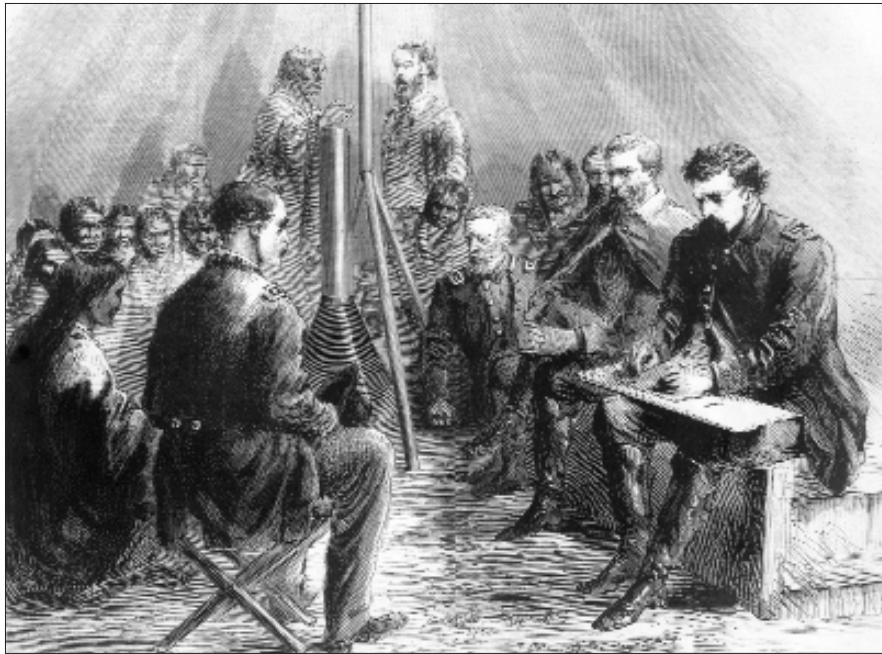
19. Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, especially ch. 8–10, 12. To accompany Utley, see Wooster, *Military and United States Indian Policy, 1865–1903*; Sherry L. Smith, *The View From Officer's Row: Army Perceptions of Western Indians* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990). Paul Andrew Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999). For works about other key leaders, see Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956); Richard Ellis, *General Pope and U. S. Indian Policy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1970); David M. Jordan, *Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldier's Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

20. Marvin H. Garfield, "The Military Post as a Factor in the Frontier Defense of Kansas, 1865–1869," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (November 1931): 50–62; "Defense of the Kansas Frontier, 1864–1865," *ibid.* (February 1932): 140–52; "Defense of the Kansas Frontier, 1866–1867," *ibid.* (August 1932): 326–44; "Defense of the Kansas Frontier, 1868–1869," *ibid.* (November 1932): 451–73; Craig Miner and William E. Unrau, *The End of Indian Kansas: A Study of Cultural Revolution, 1854–1871* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1978); Miner, *West of Wichita: Settling the High Plains of Kansas, 1865–1890* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986). See also Unrau, *Indians of Kansas: The Euro-American Invasion and Conquest of Indian Kansas* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1991).

21. W. J. D. Kennedy, ed., *On the Plains With Custer and Hancock: The Journal of Isaac Coates, Army Surgeon* (Boulder, Colo.: Johnson Books, 1997); Robert M. Utley, ed., *Life in Custer's Cavalry: Diaries and Letters of Albert and Jennie Barnitz, 1867–1868* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); George A. Armes, *Ups and Downs of an Army Officer* (Washington, D.C.: 1900); Weymouth T. Jordan Jr., ed., "A Soldier's Life on the Indian Frontier, 1876–1878: Letters of 2Lt. C.D. Cowles," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 38 (Summer 1972): 144–55.

Numerous personal accounts, memoirs, and diaries detail military life and actions on the plains after the Civil War.





The story of the struggle between American Indians and the military is told in many accounts, detailing armed clashes, attacks, and attempts at peaceful settlement through treaties. This sketch from Harper's Weekly depicts an 1867 Indian council at Fort Dodge between General Winfield Hancock and Kiowa chiefs.

Leavenworth became the center for supplying western armies. Colonel Kearny's Army of the West was a military promotion of manifest destiny, linking Kansas to the nation's future. Using his First Dragoons as a nucleus, the army also mustered into service and outfitted the First Missouri Mounted Volunteers under Colonel Alexander Doniphan, then marched southwest and occupied Santa Fe in August 1846. In 1857–1859 troops from Forts Riley and Leavenworth went to Utah during the "Mormon War" to coerce the Mormon settlements to accept United States government authority.<sup>22</sup>

But the Kansas forts are best known for Indian fighting expeditions. In retaliation for the so-called Grattan massacre, Colonel William S. Harney marched from Fort Riley in August 1855 and attacked the Sioux with deadly force. This foreshadowed the role of Kansas forts in mustering, training, and equipping frontier regiments during the 1860s and 1870s as well as serving as supply bases for future operations. The Seventh Cavalry received most of its training and equipment at Fort Riley, and the Tenth

Cavalry (buffalo soldiers) was organized at Fort Leavenworth. Forts Hays and Larned served as supply centers during the Hancock campaign of 1867, while Fort Dodge was a key link in the supply line from Fort Leavenworth to Camp Supply, Oklahoma, during Sheridan's winter campaign of 1868. Fort Leavenworth served as official headquarters during the great Sioux War of 1876–1877 and became the burial place for many Seventh cavalymen killed at the Little Big Horn. Finally, troops sent from Fort Riley participated in the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890.<sup>23</sup>

22. Joseph G. Dawson III, *Doniphan's Epic March: The 1st Missouri Volunteers in the Mexican War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999); Jack K. Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846–1848* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); Dwight L. Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny: Soldier of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

23. Information on the Harney campaign comes from Ray H. Mattison, "The Harney Expedition Against the Sioux: The Journal of Captain John B. S. Todd," *Nebraska History* 43 (June 1962): 89–130; Richmond L. Clow, "Mad Bear: William S. Harney and the Sioux Expedition of 1855–1856," *ibid.* 61 (Summer 1980): 133–53; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 115–20. On the winter campaign, see Stan Hoig, *The Battle of the Washita* (New York: Doubleday, 1976); Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 142–59; Lonnie J. White, "The Cheyenne Barrier on the Kansas Frontier, 1868–1869," *Arizona and the West* 4 (Spring 1962): 51–64; White, "The 19th Kansas Cavalry in the Indian Territory, 1868–1869: Eyewitness Accounts of Sheridan's Winter Campaign," *Red River Valley Historical Review* 3 (Spring 1978): 164–85. John S. Gray, *Centennial Campaign: The Sioux War of 1876* (Norman: Oklahoma, 1988); Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Peter R. DeMontravel, "General Nelson A. Miles and the Wounded Knee Controversy," *Arizona and the West* 28 (Spring 1986): 23–44; Elaine G. Eastman, "The Ghost Dance War and Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890–1891," *Nebraska History* 26 (January–March 1945): 26–42.

As the Indian threat to transportation and settlements decreased, the military closed most installations in Kansas, leaving only Forts Leavenworth and Riley. Both forts benefited from the determination of leaders such as General William T. Sherman to increase the professionalism of the army and to combine the training of various combat arms. To accomplish this the School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry was established in 1881 at Fort Leavenworth. It evolved into the Command and General Staff College during the twentieth century, training officers for the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars. The Cavalry and Light Artillery School began operating at Fort Riley in March 1892, which in turn led to the development of the Mounted Service School (later the Cavalry School). Following World War II the Cavalry School was replaced with the Army General School, which operates as an officer candidate school, and the Aggressor School, which trains officers in the tactics national enemies might deploy. During World War I both Forts Riley and Leavenworth became induction centers and training grounds for more than 150,000 soldiers, building entirely new facilities, such as Camp Funston at Fort Riley, to fulfill their missions. The military repeated this effort in World War II, training more than 450,000 men during the conflict, and then serving as discharge centers for more than 250,000 troops, sending them back to civilian life. Naval Air stations established at Olathe and Hutchinson trained pilots for combat and served as shipping locations for aircraft built in Kansas factories. This military presence continues in Kansas today, as Fort Leavenworth, Fort Riley, and McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita each play vital roles in national defense planning.<sup>24</sup>

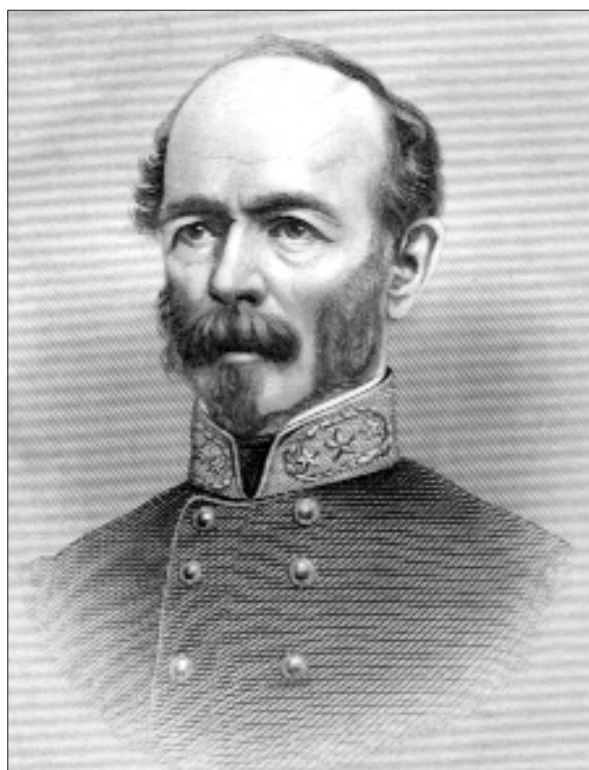
#### EXPLORATION, TRANSPORTATION, AND SETTLEMENT

Beginning with the Spanish and the French, military explorers were observers, prepared to record what they saw and spread word about areas of potential growth and prosperity. Unfortunately, standard histories of the Spanish and French empires in North America, including those by Charles Gibson, David J. Weber, and W. J. Eccles, generally ignore Kansas. For several decades, beginning with the famous Corps of Discovery in 1804, the United States War Department commissioned numerous explorations, combining military and civilian resources and specialists. Army engineers measured longitude and latitude for accurate mapmaking, noted geological formations, collected flora and fauna for eastern museum and scientific societies, and studied local Indian populations both for potential enemies and partners in trade. As William Goetzmann explained, the collection, analysis, and publication of this information for public use was formalized

24. For general information on the changes since the 1880s, see Hughes, *Fort Leavenworth*, 97–114; McKale and Young, *Fort Riley*, 119–33. See also Timothy K. Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army: Education, Professionalism, and the Officer Corps of the United States Army, 1881–1918* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978); Lucian K. Truscott Jr., *The Twilight of the U.S. Cavalry: Life in the Old Army, 1917–1942* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 75–104, 136–55. For the military impact of World War II in Kansas, see R. Douglas Hurt, "Naval Air Stations in Kansas During World War II," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 43 (Autumn 1977): 351–62; Patrick O'Brien, "Kansas at War: The Home Front 1941–1945," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 17 (Spring 1994): 6–25; O'Brien, Thomas Isern, and Daniel Lumley, "Stalag Sunflower: German Prisoners of War in Kansas," *ibid.* 7 (Autumn 1994): 182–98; Craig Miner, *Wichita, the Magic City* (Wichita, Kans.: Wichita–Sedgwick County Historical Museum, 1988), 183–98.

*As the Indian threat to transportation and settlements decreased, the military closed most installations in Kansas, leaving only Forts Leavenworth and Riley.*





Beginning with the Corps of Discovery in 1804 the U.S. government commissioned numerous explorations combining military and civilian resources. Among the many nineteenth-century military explorers was Colonel Joseph E. Johnston (above), whose First Cavalry escorted surveyors to establish the southern boundary of Kansas in 1857.

with the creation of the Corps of Topographical Engineers in 1838.<sup>25</sup> The published reports from John C. Frémont's 1843 expedition across Kansas note the location of fresh water springs, timber stands, and river crossings that would guide settlement in coming years. During the 1850s the topographical engineers conducted the only systematic mapping of the West, including specific surveys to determine the best route for the transcontinental railroad, and published their information in thirteen volumes of data, along with an improved relief map of the United States in 1861. The War Department also undertook several specific surveys in Kansas that aided settlement in Kansas. In 1825 George C. Sibley surveyed the Santa Fe Trail, noting the trees and local crops grown along the route. Three years later Isaac McCoy surveyed reservation boundaries in eastern Kansas and established the boundaries of the Fort Leavenworth military reservation. In 1857 Colonel Joseph E. Johnston and elements of the First Cavalry escorted surveyors who established the southern boundary of Kansas. In every case the official reports, the surveyor's comments, and the letters from expedition members all noted likely places for farming communities.<sup>26</sup>

Other army engineers followed the surveyors, building military roads and bridges with army labor or spending government funds to contract the work. Spread thin across the frontier, the army needed good military roads to increase its mobility and lessen the cost of supplying frontier outposts. Federally built wagon roads would transport more people and provide the means of sending produce to market. Stage lines and eventually railroads would follow the same pathways west.<sup>27</sup> When topographical engineer Lieutenant Francis T. Bryan surveyed the potential military road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley and west along the future Smoky Hill River route, he called for bridges to be built over the Solomon, Saline, and Smoky Hill Rivers. He also insisted that the road between Fort Leavenworth and Fort Riley be improved, with new bridges along the way. By 1856 the civilian engineer accompanying Bryan claimed the military road and bridges moved the line of settlement forty miles west, and he predict-

ed settlements to reach eighty-five miles west of Fort Riley by the spring of 1857. Leo Oliva, more than any other historian, has documented how the military built forts to protect commerce and travelers along the roads crossing Kansas. Starting with *Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail*, Oliva detailed the symbiotic relationship of the army, civilians, and travel. The posts were a center of civilization for travelers, a rest stop on their journey. They could shop in the sutler's store, have the post blacksmith repair their wagons or shoe their horses, receive medical aid, or just relax before traveling on.<sup>28</sup>

The army promoted railroad construction and faster communication links. General Sherman, convinced that the railroad would cut military supply costs and help subjugate the Plains Indians, directed frontier officers to aid railroad construction in every way possible. To that end troops routinely escorted railroad survey and construction crews. Forts loaned construction crews arms and ammunition, removed squatters from company claimed lands, and even allowed railroads to remove stone and timber from military reservations at no cost.<sup>29</sup> The earliest post offices usually were established at military posts. Settlers mailed letters from these locations or used them for their return addresses, and they relied on the army to ensure mail delivery. Troops escorted crews stringing telegraph wires, dug postholes, and often served as repair crews. Telegraph service was vital to local ranchers and shop owners, who used post connections to stay in touch with eastern markets and suppliers. When telephone service first reached Forts Riley and Leavenworth, civilians once again were allowed access by generous post commanders. Troops of the Ninth Cavalry built the first telephone line from Fort Riley to serve Junction City in 1883.<sup>30</sup>

#### A FRONTIER CONSTABULARY

During the nineteenth century the army routinely bolstered civilian law enforcement, supported authorities where they existed, and performed constabulary duties when civilian authorities were either nonexistent or incompetent. As the frontier moved west, territorial officials frequently used regular army troops as members of the *posse comitatus*. Historians Jerry Cooper and Barton Hacker examined the army's role as strikebreaker and union buster in the nineteenth century, concluding that officers saw strikes as a sign of disorder and sympathized with

*As the frontier  
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25. Charles Gibson, *Spain In America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 29; David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 46–49, 80–82; W. J. Eccles, *France in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 221; Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West*, 4–5, 37–45, 57–59.

26. Herman Friis, "The Image of the American West at Mid-Century, 1840–1860," in *The Frontier Re-Examined*, ed. John Francis McDermott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 49–63; Kate L. Gregg, ed. *The Road to Santa Fe: The Journal and Diaries of George Champlin Sibley* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1952), 10–11, 24; Louise Barry, *The Beginning of the West: Annals of the Kansas Gateway to the American West, 1540–1854* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1972), 1121, 1131; Lela Barnes, "Journal of Isaac McCoy for the Exploring Expedition of 1828," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 5 (November 1936): 339–77; Nyle H. Miller, ed., "Surveying the Southern Boundary Line of Kansas: From the Private Journal of Colonel Joseph E. Johnston," *ibid.* 1 (February 1931): 104–39.

27. Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion*; Jackson, *Wagon Roads West*; Oliva, "The Army and Continental Expansion," in *The United States Army in Peacetime: Essays in Honor of the Bicentennial, 1775–1975*, ed. Robin Higham and Carol Brandt (Manhattan, Kans.: Military Affairs/Aerospace Historian Publishing, 1975), 21–39; Oliva, "Frontier Forts and the Settlement of Western Kansas," in *Kansas and the West: Essays in Honor of Nyle H. Miller*, ed. Forrest Blackburn (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1976), 59–73.

28. W. Turrentine Jackson, "The Army Engineers as Road Surveyors and Builders in Kansas and Nebraska, 1854–1858," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 17 (February 1949): 37–59; Dobak, *Fort Riley and Its Neighbors*, 34; David K. Clapsaddle, "The Fort Hays–Fort Dodge Road," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 14 (Summer 1991) 101–12; Oliva, *Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967); William Y. Chalfant, *Dangerous Passage: The Santa Fe Trail and the Mexican War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Clapsaddle, "Conflict and Commerce on the Santa Fe Trail: The Fort Riley–Fort Larned Road, 1860–1870," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 16 (Summer 1993): 124–37; Walker D. Wyman, "The Military Phrase of Santa Fe Freighting, 1846–1865," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (November 1932): 415–28.

29. The relationship between the army and railroads is well documented. See Robert G. Athearn, *Union Pacific Country* (Chicago: Rand McNally Co., 1971); Maury Klein, *Union Pacific: Birth of a Railroad, 1862–1893* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1987).

30. Hervey Johnson, *Tending the Talking Wire: A Buck Soldier's View of Indian Country, 1863–1866* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press); William A. Dobak, "Fort Riley's Black Soldiers and the Army's Changing Role in the West, 1867–1885," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 22 (Autumn 1999): 214–27.



*Led by West Point trained officers, the troops saw themselves as devoted public servants, performing unpopular duties while enduring public abuse.*

businessmen. Troops from Kansas forts helped crush the nationwide Great Railroad Strike of 1877 and the Pullman Strike of 1894.<sup>31</sup>

Charged with enforcing federal laws and treaties on Indian land, the army cracked down on illegal whiskey traders in Indian Territory and removed white squatters on Indian land. Troops from Fort Riley removed squatters from the Osage and Kaw Reservations during the 1860s and early 1870s.<sup>32</sup>

In 1843 Captain Philip St. George Cooke's First Dragoons prevented Texans from robbing Mexican trade caravans along the Santa Fe Trail. Soldiers from Fort Dodge and Fort Hays pursued horse thieves, while soldiers recruited by the Ellis County sheriff broke up the famous Collins-Bass gang, killing Collins and recovering twenty thousand dollars in gold coin. Soldiers at Fort Hays served as town guard when civilian authorities failed to keep the peace in Hays City. Jim Leiker demonstrated how these actions, combined with the fact that part of the garrison was African American, displeased many of the locals.<sup>33</sup>

The military's role as frontier constabulary during Bleeding Kansas is studied more than any other time period. Led by West Point trained officers, the troops saw themselves as devoted public servants, performing unpopular duties while enduring public abuse. The army was contemptuous of disorderly frontier society, and officers suspected civilians exploited the army for their personal gain. For six years troops from Fort Leavenworth and Fort Riley regularly intervened between proslavery and free-soil partisans, preventing bloodshed and lessening property loss. Some military actions are well documented: Edwin Sumner dissolved the Topeka legislature; Philip St. George Cooke prevented Jim Lane's "army" from destroying Lecompton; and Cooke's troops combined with Joseph Johnston's to prevent an attack on Lawrence in September 1856.<sup>34</sup>

#### AGENTS OF CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE

It is difficult to determine how successfully the military promoted "civilization" in Kansas. Schools and literacy, association with members of "decent" society, religion, and advanced thinking all were considered signs of a developed society. Many military retirees settled near their own posts, becoming influential

31. Jerry M. Cooper, *The Army and Civil Disorder: Federal Military Intervention in Labor Disputes, 1877-1900* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980); Barton Hacker, "The United States Army as a National Police Force: The Federal Policing of Labor Disputes, 1877-1898," *Military Affairs* 33 (April 1969): 255-64. Clayton D. Laurie, "Filling the Breach: Military Aid to the Civil Power in the Trans-Mississippi West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 25 (Summer 1994): 149-62.

32. Robert W. Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1789-1878* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1988); Henry P. Walker, "When the Law Wore Army Blue," *Military Collector and Historian* 29 (Spring 1977): 4-16; Raymond L. Welty, "The Policing of the Frontier by the Army, 1860-1870," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 7 (August 1938): 246-57.

33. Otis E. Young, "Military Protections of the Santa Fe Trail and Trade," *Missouri Historical Review* 49 (October 1954): 19-32; James N. Leiker, "Black Soldiers at Fort Hays, Kansas"; James D. Drees, "The Army and the Horse Thieves," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 11 (Spring 1988): 35-53.

34. Ball, *Army Regulars*, 172-88. For the ideology and historiography of Bleeding Kansas, see the excellent essay by Gunja SenGupta, "Bleeding Kansas: Review Essay," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 24 (Winter 2001-2002): 318-41. For Sumner's actions, see Tony Mullis, "The Dispersal of the Topeka Legislature: A Look at Command and Control (C2) During Bleeding Kansas," *ibid.* 27 (Spring-Summer 2004): 62-75; Mullis, *Peacekeeping on the Plains: Army Operations in Bleeding Kansas* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004). See also Marvin Ewy, "The United States Army in the Kansas Border Troubles, 1855-1856," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 32 (Winter 1966): 385-400.

members of the community. John Gates and Jim Sherow have clearly shown that military outposts and their garrisons were not isolated but rather served as centers of cultural exchange.<sup>35</sup>

Officers' wives also played a major role in the "civilizing" process. Sandra Myres, Patricia Stallard, and Michel Nacy demonstrated that these women frequently served as social critics, disparaging the lack of social graces, schools, and uncouth behavior they saw in nearby towns. The numerous published personal reminiscences of officers' wives are a great resource for historians and have helped introduce more social history into traditional military history.<sup>36</sup>

The military has helped build civilization by fostering schools, churches, and music. Local children attended post schools before public schools existed, and in the twentieth century students left the forts to attend public high schools. Post chaplains invited settlers to attend services in the post chapel, and they ministered to the surrounding area if needed. Christmas celebrations held in the post chapels were shared and appreciated by the local civilian population. Regimental bands posted to Forts Riley, Leavenworth, and Hays played at agricultural fairs, combined military and civilian balls, fundraisers for charities, and July Fourth celebrations.<sup>37</sup>



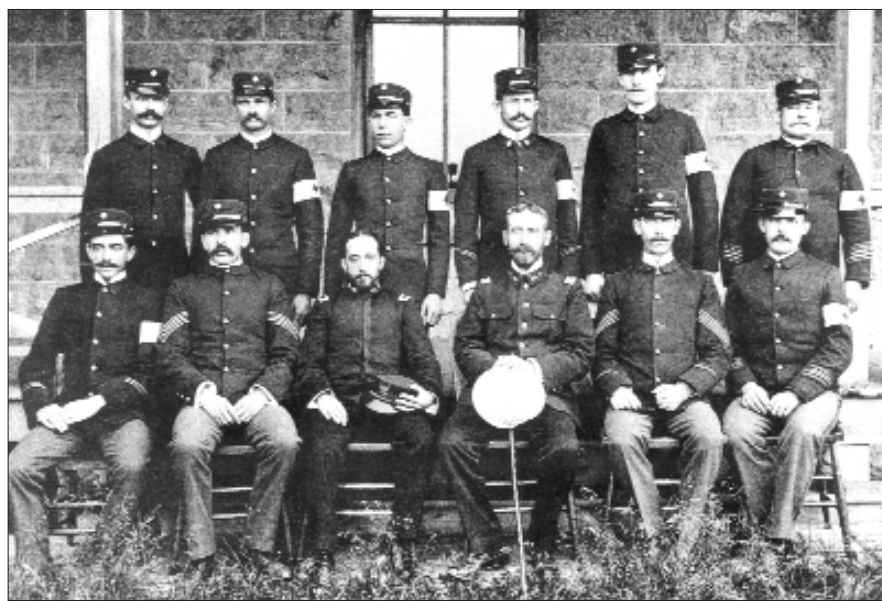
*The military acted as agents of culture by fostering schools, churches, and music. Among the favorite cultural events on and around military posts were performances by regimental bands, such as this Eighteenth Infantry Band photographed in 1886 at Fort Hays.*

35. John M. Gates, "The Alleged Isolation of U.S. Army Officers in the Late 19th Century," *Parameters* 10 (September 1980): 32-45; James E. Sherow and William S. Reeder Jr., "A Richly Textured Community: Fort Riley, Kansas, and American Indians, 1853-1911," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 21 (Spring 1998): 2-17.

36. Sandra L. Myres, "Romance and Reality on the American Frontier: Views of Army Wives," *Western Historical Quarterly* 13 (October 1982): 409-27; Myres, "Army Wives in the Trans-Mississippi West: A Bibliography," in *Following the Drum: A Glimpse of Frontier Life*, ed. Teresa Griffin Viele (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 257-73; Patricia Y. Stallard, *Glittering Misery: Dependents of the Indian Fighting Army*, rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Anne Bruner Eales, *Army Wives on the American Frontier: Living By the Bugles* (Boulder, Colo.: Johnson Books, 1996); Michel J. Nacy, *Members of the Regiment: Army Officer's Wives on the Western Frontier, 1865-1890* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000). Among the individual accounts that apply in part to Kansas are Robert C. and Eleanor R. Carriker, eds., *An Army Wife on the Frontier: The Memoirs of Alice Blackwood Baldwin, 1867-1877* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1975); Ellen McGowan Biddle, *Reminiscences of a Soldier's Wife* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1907); Elizabeth B. Custer, *Tenting on the Plains, or, General Custer in Kansas and Texas* (New York: C. L. Webster and Co., 1887); Mary Leefe Laurence, *Daughter of the Regiment: Memoirs of a Childhood in the Frontier Army, 1878-1898* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); Shirley A. Leckie, ed., *The Colonel's Lady on the Western Frontier: The Correspondence of Alice Kirk Grierson* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); Frances M. Roe, *Army Letters from an Officer's Wife, 1871-1888* (New York: Harper and Row, 1909).

37. William A. Dobak and Thomas D. Phillips, *The Black Regulars 1866-1898* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 120; Lori A. Cox-Paul and James W. Wengert, *A Frontier Army Christmas* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1996), 74-75; Thomas C. Railsback, "Military Bands and Music at Old Fort Hays, 1867-1889," *Journal of the West* 22 (July 1983): 28-35; Oliva, *Fort Hays*, 42.





Military doctors often were the first and only medical professionals in the area, thus civilians turned to them when home remedies would not work. Doctors treated gunshot wounds, set broken bones, dealt with injured children, and amputated frostbitten or gangrenous limbs. Photographed here is the Fort Riley medical corps, ca. 1900.

The military has always responded to civilian needs during emergencies in Kansas. Other than George E. Omar Jr.'s account of medical care at Fort Riley, and the personal accounts of a few post surgeons, little is published on this topic. Military doctors often were the first and only medical professionals in the area, thus civilians turned to them when home remedies would not work. Doctors treated gunshot wounds, set broken bones, dealt with injured children, and amputated frostbitten or gangrenous limbs. Fort Dodge post surgeon William S. Tremaine treated everything from simple lacerations to cholera and reputedly delivered every baby born in the area. Starting in the 1860s military physicians at Fort Riley had rural medical practices that comprised a fifty-mile radius. During massive disease outbreaks they treated soldiers and civilians alike, putting themselves at risk to help the ill. Ramon Powers, Gene Younger, and Jim Leiker have examined the causes and paths of the deadly 1867 cholera outbreak. Powers and Younger accepted the nineteenth-century view that sol-

diers spread the disease, while Leiker insisted that poor sanitation and hygiene in the railroad camps and towns contributed to the deaths of hundreds of soldiers and civilians.<sup>38</sup> Fort Riley military medical personnel responded again when influenza struck the region in 1918–1919.

There is no comprehensive survey of how many times military personnel have responded when Kansans faced natural disasters. Virgil Dean and George Omar have noted how the military assisted during the great flood of 1951, sandbagging, rescuing victims, and providing food and medical assistance. Gilbert Fite detailed how the army provided food and clothing to destitute families harmed by drought and grasshoppers in 1874.<sup>39</sup> But more study is needed here.

The military confronted racial issues because it maintained the primary contact with American Indians and also employed six black regiments. Jim Leiker's

38. George E. Omar Jr., "An Army Hospital: From Dragoons to Rough Riders, Fort Riley 1853–1903," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 23 (Winter 1957): 337–67; Omar, "An Army Hospital: From Horses to Helicopters, Fort Riley 1903–1957," *ibid.* 24 (Spring 1958): 57–78; Ramon S. Powers and Gene Younger, "Cholera and the Army in the West: Treatment and Control in 1866 and 1867," *Military Affairs* 39 (April 1975): 49–54; Powers and Younger, "Cholera on the Plains: The Epidemic of 1867 in Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 37 (Winter 1971): 351–93; James N. Leiker, "Voices from a Disease Frontier: Kansans and Cholera, 1867," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 17 (Winter 1994): 236–53.

39. Virgil W. Dean, ed., "The Great Flood of 1951: A Letter from Catharine Wright Menninger," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 21 (Spring 1998): 46–58; Omar, "An Army Hospital: From Horses to Helicopters," 72–73; Gilbert C. Fite, "The United States Army and Relief to Pioneer Settlers, 1874–1875," *Journal of the West* 6 (January 1967): 99–107.

insightful essay on race relations discusses the issues of race statewide, but this is an area of study in which military and social histories frequently intertwine. The military mirrored society at large in that racism existed, but the military also offered minorities opportunities to prove their worth that did not exist in the civilian world.<sup>40</sup>

Members of the military had mixed feelings about American Indians. They fought against them, defended them from white troublemakers, and alternately saw them as innocent victims or barriers to civilization. Jim Sherow and Bill Reeder suggested that around Fort Riley at least, Indians were given various employment opportunities, from freighters to ferrymen, but especially as Indian scouts. This employment furthered the goals of assimilation, designed to wipe clean native culture and "make the red man white." Bonnie Lynn-Sherow and Susannah Ural Baker demonstrated how this reasoning process continued during World War I, as the Office of Indian Affairs saw the army as the perfect tool for assimilation at Camp Funston, Fort Riley.<sup>41</sup>

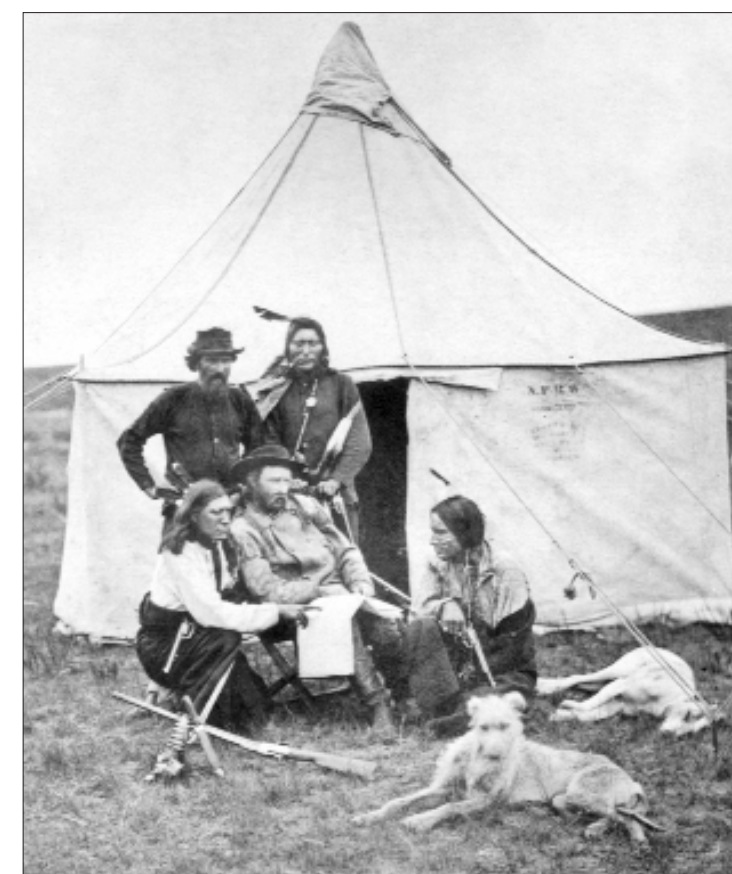
Two of the early standards focusing on the African American soldier's experience in the West are William H. Leckie's study of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry *Buffalo Soldiers*, and Arlen Fowler's *Black Infantry in the West, 1869–1891*. Both works praise the efforts of the African American units in the face of institutional racism. Jim Leiker recently examined violence between white civilians and black soldiers at Fort Hays, and he refuted the idea that black soldiers passively accepted all "frontier justice" that whites chose to hand out. Instead, the soldiers banded together to protect themselves, challenged discrimination, and sought justice by armed force if necessary. Finally, Willy Dobak revised and expanded Tom Phillips's 1970 dissertation to review the total life experiences and contributions of all the black regulars serving in the West.<sup>42</sup>

The army, by stationing black regiments in posts near predominantly white communities, made Kansans face racism. White Kansans were happy when these

40. James N. Leiker, "Race Relations in the Sunflower State," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 25 (Autumn 2002): 214–36.

41. Sherow and Reeder, "A Richly Textured Community"; Bonnie Lynn-Sherow and Susannah Ural Bruce, "'How Cola' from Camp Funston: American Indians and the Great War," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 24 (Summer 2001): 84–97.

42. William H. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967); Arlen Fowler, *Black Infantry in the West, 1869–1891* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971); Leiker, "Black Soldiers at Fort Hays, Kansas"; Dobak and Phillips, *The Black Regulars*.



Members of the military had mixed feelings about American Indians. They fought against them, defended them from white troublemakers, and alternately saw them as innocent victims or barriers to civilization. At some posts Indians were employed in various positions, the most common being as scouts. This photograph of Colonel George A. Custer and his Indian scouts was taken during the Black Hills Expedition in 1874.



*The federal government subsidized people to move west and create communities near the forts.*

regiments were defending them from Indian attacks, and praised their courage in battle and the fact that these units had low desertion rates. Junction City, eager to keep close ties with Fort Riley and understanding that the commanders of these units usually supported their men, adapted its racial policies accordingly.<sup>43</sup> But nasty racial confrontations and violence erupted between white civilians and the garrisons of Fort Larned and Fort Hays. In the twentieth century, when President Harry S. Truman desegregated the military by executive order, race relations in Kansas still were characterized by the pre-World War II prejudices.

#### MILITARY SPENDING AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Military spending always has been one of the pillars of the Kansas economy. Federal spending began with exploration, purchasing supplies and animals for trips across the plains. When the government began building forts it required civilian contract labor as well as soldiers as fatigue parties. The *Kansas Forts Series* volumes discuss hiring civilian artisans to cut stone, masons to construct buildings, and carpenters for numerous tasks. Once built, the forts hired civilian employees, especially to clerk for the quartermaster. Civilian payrolls increased during times of war, but freighting and supply contracts provided the largest influx of federal dollars into the Kansas economy. Isolated frontier posts required that supplies be shipped to them from central depots at Fort Leavenworth, Fort Riley, or elsewhere until they became self-sufficient. Few posts could have supported themselves from local farmers' trade. Civilians competed for government contracts; some freighters followed troops to each newly constructed post for the chance to win a supply contract. Many recently retired soldiers, such as Percival Lowe, stayed in the region, used their army contacts to win civilian contracts, and became freighters.

In essence, the federal government subsidized people to move west and create communities near the forts. Federal dollars created local commercial and social elites, and town-building spurts usually coincided with new federal spending in the region. Once towns were established, soldiers spent most of their pay on local entertainment, usually alcohol and prostitutes. Acknowledging the profitability of a military presence, Kansas civilians would do almost anything to win federal dollars. Many officers from General Sherman down to local commanders criticized locals for "crying wolf" about any Indian threat—a frequent ploy to establish or keep troops in the area and ensure the federal dollars to support them flowed into the local economy. Unfortunately, only one excellent book closely examines the relationship between military spending and the regional economy: Willy Dobak's *Fort Riley and Its Neighbors*, which only covers the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup>

The importance of military spending on the Kansas economy continued into the twentieth century. Many forts closed, but building continued at Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth, pouring millions of dollars into the local economies. During World War I both forts expanded and became training centers for hundreds of thousands of young men. These soldiers required food and supplies, which meant

more local contracts. World War II brought expansion not only at Forts Riley and Leavenworth, but it also necessitated the construction of naval airfields in Olathe and Hutchinson. Billions of dollars in contracts supported the airplane plants in Wichita, changing the population and prosperity of that city forever. Additional federal funds arrived in communities across the state as military-built POW camps housed and supplied the German troops sent there.

Today the impact of military spending is still immense. In 2002 the army and other government agencies connected with Fort Riley spent \$688,518,714 in the region to feed, house, and supply the troops and their dependents at the post, as well as to continue ongoing construction projects. For the same fiscal year the economic impact of Fort Leavenworth on the area was \$451,699,675. Little wonder state and local leaders wring their hands and appeal to Washington to keep the state's military installations intact.<sup>45</sup>

#### WITHER THE DISCIPLINE

"Who owns History?" is a question Eric Foner has raised for us to consider.<sup>46</sup> Each generation asserts its right to claim and interpret the past, to reserve its regional events for special consideration. Kansans have every right to claim ownership of their past while acknowledging its links to the national story. Military history will be rewritten as new questions, information, and priorities enter the field. History is about discovery, and to that end we must consider our course in pursuing further study of the relationship between the military and Kansas history. What specific books need to be written? We need a comprehensive and balanced examination of the military campaigns in Kansas—a combination of the available materials to present issues and campaigns from both American Indian and soldier/civilian perspectives. Additionally, we need a new work on the Indian frontier in Kansas, both before and after the Civil War; an up-to-date volume on Civil War Kansas and the West, demonstrating the connections between politics, Indian



*World War II brought expansion not only at Forts Riley and Leavenworth, but it also necessitated the construction of naval airfields in Olathe and Hutchinson. These military personnel were photographed after World War II at the Naval Air Station in Hutchinson.*

43. Susan Lloyd Franzen, *Behind the Façade of Fort Riley's Hometown: The Inside Story of Junction City, Kansas* (Ames, Iowa: Pivot Press, 1998).

44. Dobak, *Fort Riley and Its Neighbors*.

45. Statistics from Fort Riley Public Affairs Office and Fort Leavenworth Public Affairs Office.

46. Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002).





*While uncovering officers' accounts, we must not forget those of their dependents, such as letters from wives living in Kansas. Accounts from women such as Jennie Barnitz, Priscilla White, or Alice Baldwin would offer insights on fort life and possibly fill in some of the missing pieces of the military experience. The above photograph was taken in 1867 of newlyweds Lieutenant Frank D. Baldwin and Alice Blackwood Baldwin. Mrs. Baldwin would later write that their honeymoon was spent making a cold winter journey to join Lieutenant Baldwin's regiment at Fort Harker.*

issues, and the greater war; and studies of Forts Riley and Leavenworth in the twentieth century, continuing the story where the *Kansas Forts Series* leaves off.

Thorough research studies would entail utilizing the experiences of average soldiers whenever available, not just the view from "officers' row." Were soldiers "just doing a job," or did the average soldier see himself as an advance agent of civilization? Nor should junior officers be ignored. Kansas post records list hundreds of officers from both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Surely many of them kept journals and diaries or wrote letters and created other types of documents. We can benefit from knowing these soldiers' views about serving in Kansas; tracking down and assembling these first-hand accounts would help us understand the events of the time.

While uncovering officers' accounts we must not forget those of their dependents, such as letters from wives living in Kansas. Where are the letters and observations of Millicent Kidd and family stationed at Fort Larned? Priscilla White, whose husband was chaplain? Or May Preston Radford, first lady of Fort Leavenworth and wife of Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny? To begin, however, all of the existing army wives' accounts about Kansas should be pulled together into an anthology. Such a task would entail collecting and editing the letters of Biddle, Roe, Baldwin, Grierson, Barnitz, and Custer, among others. Sandra Myres's decades-old call to action should not be ignored either. We can fill out the missing parts of the picture of army life. Where is the seamy side of army life—sexual abuse, infidelity, drinking, drug use, and other regular life occurrences?

Dobak's detailed analysis of the economic impact of nineteenth-century Fort Riley is a model to follow. What is needed next is comprehensive study of the impact of all the early forts. How many soldiers retire and settle in Kansas? What is their impact on the local communities and educational institutions? In the twentieth century we have numerous isolated studies about World War II but no comprehensive look at the impact of military spending on the state during that war, or during the twentieth century as a whole. We also should examine in detail how the military impacted the creation of both the transportation and communications infrastructures in the state.

Finally, we need to change how textbooks cover the role of the military in Kansas history. Many authors appear uncomfortable with military history; either the traditional basic campaigns are covered with the Turnerian "advance of civilization" viewpoint, or the military disappears beneath a wave of social issues, ideology, or charges of race hatred. Just as military history has embraced social history and balanced its study, so too must the textbooks. Only when we finish painting the picture of Kansas and the military will we succeed in making our history comprehensive and inclusive, closer to the reality of our human existence. 