The Fort Leavenworth-Fort Gibson Military Road and the Founding of Fort Scott

LOUISE BARRY

ONE hundred years ago the U. S. military post Fort Scott was founded. The site was in the Indian country a few miles beyond Missouri's border, on the Western military road. Established May 30, 1842, Fort Scott existed as a frontier post for nearly twelve years. It was abandoned in 1853, the year preceding organization of Kansas territory. Some of the buildings erected in the 1840's remain today within the town of Fort Scott.

The establishment of the fort was a link in the development of a system of defense for the Western border. The route of the Western military road, approved by congress in 1836, was the principal factor in the location of Fort Scott.

The Indian removal act of 1830 established a federal policy for the removal of all Indian tribes from the Eastern states to country west of the Mississippi river. By 1835 more than 30,000 Indians, principally Creeks, Choctaws, Cherokees and Shawnees, had been settled in territory immediately west of Missouri and Arkansas. In 1834 congress passed the Intercourse act "to regulate trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes, and to preserve peace on the frontiers." This act further defined the policy of the government towards the Indians. It provided strict regulations for relations between the white settlements and the Indian country and for the use of U. S. military forces to make the act effective. Because no natural barriers existed and because troops at the outlying army posts (Forts Leavenworth, Gibson and Towson) were insufficient to police the border country, congress was faced with the problem of enlarging the frontier defense and patrol system.

On December 23, 1835, the senate by resolution instructed its committee on military affairs to "inquire into the expediency of making an appropriation for the purpose of constructing a military

1. See Footnote 50 for note on reestablishment of Fort Scott in later periods.
2. Arkansas territory. Arkansas was granted statehood June 15, 1836.
4. The distance by land from Fort Leavenworth (on the Missouri river) to Fort Gibson (on the Arkansas river) was around 250 miles; from the latter point to Fort Towson (on Red river) was about 125 miles. A fourth post, Fort Coffee, established in 1834 some fifty miles southeast of Fort Gibson, was never a strong defensive point.
road from Cantonment ‘Des Moines’ to Cantonment Leavenworth, thence to Fort Gibson . . . .” 5 Secretary of War Lewis Cass advised the committee:

. . . I have no doubt that a road from the western bank of the Mississippi to Fort Leavenworth and thence to Fort Gibson, would be very advantageous to the United States. It need not be an expensive work. Cutting down the timber for a reasonable width, bridging the streams, and causewaying the marshy places, so as to allow the free movement of troops, would be all that would be necessary. . . . From Fort Leavenworth to Fort Gibson the route would pass west of the State of Missouri and the Territory of Arkansas, and through the lands assigned to the emigrating Indians. It will be essentially necessary that the United States should not only possess a respectable force in this quarter, but that they should have the means of transporting it freely along this line of communication. . . . 6

The house committee on military affairs reviewing the “exposed condition of our inland frontier” in a report March 3, 1836, declared:

The savage tribes which border upon our settlements, from the Canada line to Louisiana, are more dangerous to the lives and property of our citizens than the whole civilized world. . . . The late sufferings from the Black Hawk war in the north, and the more recent barbarities of the Florida Indians in the south admonish us of the necessity of furnishing more effectual protection to our inland borders. . . .

The policy of the government, to remove the Indians from the interior of the States beyond our western boundary, renders a regular system of defence still more necessary. 7

The War Department’s plan for defense at this time was based upon the establishment of a cordon of army posts along the frontier, linked together by a lateral line of communication—the military road already under consideration. The quartermaster general suggested an appropriation of $65,000 to establish four new frontier army posts. He estimated that the military highway could be built for the relatively small sum of $35,000. This was possible because funds to repair the existing 300-mile road between Forts Jesup and Towson had been provided by the previous congress, and because the 800 miles of high and open ground between Forts Towson and Snelling would require little construction. 8

Congress’ first step in bolstering Western defenses was an act approved May 14, 1836, appropriating $50,000 for the removal of

5. American State Papers (Military Affairs), v. VI, p. 12. Indian Agent John Dougherty had suggested a frontier military road in December, 1834.—Dougherty to Maj. J. B. Bram, December 16, 1834, in ibid., pp. 14, 15. An application from citizens of Clay county, Missouri, for the erection of military posts and the opening of military roads around the state’s frontier, was communicated to the senate December 24, 1835.—Ibid., v. V, pp. 729-731.
6. Ibid., v. VI, p. 13.
7. Ibid., p. 149.
8. Ibid., p. 153.
Fort Gibson to a location "on or near the western frontier line of Arkansas." Passed principally to satisfy the citizens of Arkansas who wanted military protection nearer their settlements, it was also designed to provide a more healthful site for a post with an excessively high death rate.

On July 2, 1836, President Jackson approved the enabling act for the better protection of the Western frontier. It provided: (1) for the surveying and opening of a military road from a point on the upper Mississippi (between the mouths of the St. Peters' and Des Moines rivers) to Red river in the south; (2) that the road should pass west of the states of Missouri and Arkansas, with the condition that the assent of the Indian tribes through whose territory the road would pass must be first obtained; (3) for the construction of military posts along the road (locations unspecified); (4) for the use of United States troops to perform the required labor; (5) the sum of $100,000 to accomplish the objects of the act.\textsuperscript{10}

Two weeks later the Secretary of War wrote U. S. army officers Col. Zachary Taylor, Maj. W. G. McNeil and Maj. T. F. Smith, to inform them they had been selected as commissioners to lay out the road and locate sites for military posts. In discussing the locations for the proposed forts he said:

An act of Congress requires the removal of Fort Gibson, and its reestablishment near the Arkansas boundary line. You will endeavor to select some suitable and healthful position for this purpose upon the Arkansas; and, wherever this point is designated, there the road must cross the river. I cannot state the number of posts which ought to be established; this must be left discretionary with you. . . . Four positions are distinctly marked: one at Fort Towson, or wherever the road terminates on Red river; another on the Arkansas; a third at Fort Leavenworth, or wherever the road crosses the Missouri; and a fourth at St. Peters, or at the point of intersection with the Mississippi. The intervening stations must be left to your discretion. Probably, from four to six may be found necessary. . . .\textsuperscript{11}

No extra pay was allowed the officers in performing these tasks. Colonel Taylor and Major McNeil found it impossible to serve on the commission. Brigadier General Atkinson appointed Col. S. W.

\textsuperscript{9} Laws of the United States, op. cit., p. 337. A memorial dated October 28, 1833, from the general assembly of the territory of Arkansas, asking the removal of Fort Gibson to the old site of Fort Smith (on the Arkansas boundary), was communicated to the house January 18, 1834. In 1839, by congressional act, the boundary of Arkansas was moved forty miles west of its present location. Fort Smith, on the old boundary, was abandoned and Fort Gibson (established in 1834) protected the new frontier. In 1838 the forty-mile strip was ceded by the government to the Cherokee Indians and the Arkansas boundary fixed again at the old location. Fort Gibson remained in the Cherokee country.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 444.

\textsuperscript{11} See Lewis Cass to Colonel Taylor, Major McNeil and Major Smith, July 16, 1836.—25 Cong., 2 Sess., House Doc. 278 (Serial 328), pp. 9-12.
Kearny and Capt. Nathan Boone to fill the vacancies. The commission was finally organized about the beginning of November. Although it was too late in the season to commence a survey the commissioners proceeded with the other duty charged to them—the selection of a site "on or near the Western frontier line of Arkansas," for the removal of Fort Gibson. They reported from Columbus, Ark., on December 11:

... We have decided upon recommending to you the site upon which Fort Coffee at present stands. It is upon the right bank of the Arkansas river, in the Choctaw country, and about seven and a half miles from the western boundary line of Arkansas. ...

Having visited Fort Gibson, and considering it, as we do, the key of the country around it, and that the Government, in removing the Indians from the east to the west side of the Mississippi, has pledged its faith to protect them from each other, and from the wild Indians of the Prairie, we recommend to you the erecting of new barracks for the quartering of troops near that point, for the above purposes. ...

The presence of a military force, near Fort Gibson is indispensable for the preservation of peace amongst the Indians themselves.12

At the close of the report they wrote: "... In the spring, when the grass will support our horses, we will recommence, for an energetic prosecution of the duties required of us."

On January 24, 1837, the Secretary of War transferred the entire project to the quartermaster general's department.13 The only developments up to the middle of the year were the purchase of a $200 baggage wagon for the commissioners' use, and the appointment of Lt. P. R. Thompson, first U. S. dragoons, as disbursing officer. Lack of progress was due principally to Colonel Kearny's refusal to proceed until engineers were sent out to direct the road survey. A second cause of delay was the undetermined boundary between Missouri and the territory of Wisconsin which held up the survey between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Thus matters stood at the beginning of July, a year after the passage of the act for frontier protection, with no single important step achieved.

A change of administration in March, 1837, had resulted in the appointment of Joel R. Poinsett as Secretary of War. It was at his express desire that Brig. Gen. Henry Atkinson was added to the board of commissioners late in July and authorized to supervise its work. In answer General Atkinson wrote:

... If it is intended that I should only organize the commission and give instructions to the other members for the performance of the duty, I will undertake to do so cheerfully. ... The two commissioners from the

12. Ibid., pp. 14, 15.
13. Ibid., p. 16.
1st dragoons, Colonel Kearney and Captain Boon, will very shortly proceed on the southern route as far as the Arkansas river, designate a road, and fix upon a position for a military post, either on the Osage or Grand river, and then return to Leavenworth. . . . I will take leave to suggest that another commission be instituted, to act in conjunction with the present one, whose duty should be to fix on positions for permanent posts on the Arkansas river, and lay out a road from that river to Red river; and the other commission to lay out the road and fix on positions for military posts, from the Arkansas to St. Peter’s, (Fort Snelling). The duties apportioned in this way could soon be executed, say during the fall and early winter months. . . . I . . . will at once assume the authority of giving instructions to the present commission, and of sending the topographical engineers, on their arrival, to report to Colonel Kearney at Fort Leavenworth.14

The plan outlined was followed in part although subsequently the military road was divided into three, rather than two, sections. These were the northern, from Fort Snelling to Fort Leavenworth; the southern, from the Arkansas river to Fort Towson; and the middle section, between Fort Leavenworth and the Arkansas river. Separate commissions surveyed the three sections. Late in August Civil Engineer Charles Dimmock and an assistant, employed to survey the middle section, arrived at Fort Leavenworth. On September 1 they set out for the Arkansas river, accompanied by Commissioners Kearny and Boone, and a small dragoon escort, exploring as they proceeded. The survey was commenced September 27 at a point just across the Arkansas river from Fort Coffee.15 It was completed to Fort Leavenworth on October 8. The 286-mile route was marked by blazing timber in the wooded sections and erecting mounds at mile intervals in the prairie country. The commissioners explained the objective of the survey had been “to run the road . . . as close as possible to the State line of Arkansas” and that “after gradually approaching” for the first thirty miles the road “comes within three of it, and continues approaching until it passes within a few yards of it; after which it runs along the western boundary of that State and of Missouri, varying from that to a few miles, (generally from about a half to a mile,) keeping the whole distance in the Indian country.” They recommended two locations for new military posts:

. . . The commissioners . . . recommend the establishment of one on the south side of Spring river, where the survey crosses it. That point is about four and a half miles west of the State line of Missouri, and about one hundred and twenty-eight from Fort Coffee; the position is a good one, and has every advantage—water, timber, stone, and, no doubt, is healthy. . . .

14. Ibid., p. 3.
15. Probably this point for the beginning of the survey was chosen because of the expected removal of Fort Gibson, required by the law of May 14, 1886.
The commissioners would also recommend the establishment of another post near the "Marais des Cygnes." Where the survey crosses that river is a beautiful spot, and about a mile west of the State line of Missouri, eighty-six miles from Spring river, and about the same distance from this post. . . . Timber, stone, water, and good mill-sites, are to be had there. . . .

The establishment of military posts at the above designated points would form a connected chain between this and the Arkansas, would be an effectual protection for that part of the frontier against any inroads by the Indians, would give confidence to the white settlers along the line, and which the commissioners recommend as worthy of immediate attention.16

A special report of the survey, made by Dimmock at the request of Secretary of War J. R. Poinsett, is printed here in full:

Portsmouth, Virginia,
February 23, 1838.

Sir: In compliance with your wishes, as expressed to me a few days since, I respectfully lay before you a description of the country over which I surveyed and located a military road, along the western borders of the States of Arkansas and Missouri, between the rivers of the same name.

I should have done this before, at the time I presented the map through the quartermaster general, had I not been informed by the military commissioners, under whose immediate directions I acted, that no report was required of me.

The survey commenced on the left bank of the Arkansas river, directly opposite Fort Coffee, about eight miles west of the western boundary of the State of Arkansas; and gradually approaching this line, and that of the west of the State of Missouri, terminated at Fort Leavenworth, on the Missouri river; the whole length of which is two hundred and eighty-six miles. From the bank of the Arkansas river to a spur of the Ozark mountains called "Lee's Creek Mountain," a distance of seventeen miles, the route is over a broken country, thickly timbered, yet presenting no serious obstacle to the making [of] a good road, and with but small expense.

From this point ("Lee's Creek Mountain") to the head-waters of Lee's creek, a distance of seventeen and a half miles, the route is over many rough features of the Ozark ridge, the most prominent of which is known as the "Benson Mountain." It is along this part of the line that are to be found the most difficulties on the whole route, as here is passed the main ridge of the Ozark.

These difficulties are not continuous, but rather occurring every mile or two; nor do they present themselves so formidable but that they may be readily graded down.

By reference to the maps of this portion of the western country, it will be seen that the Ozark chain extends far west of the State boundary, terminating near the mouth of the Illinois river, a tributary of the Arkansas. To avoid this, then, the place of departure must be taken higher up the Arkansas; but this is a consideration secondary to that of fixing upon the most favorable point on that stream for a fort, a question to be determined by the War Department. I am, however, certain that no further east of the line run can the road be located, without encountering a greater number of difficulties, in-

16. 25 Cong., 2 Sess., House Doc. 311 (Serial 329), pp. 36, 37. The commissioners' report was dated November 16, 1837.
LINE OF THE WESTERN MILITARY FRONTIER, JUNE, 1845

Traced from a more detailed map (1837) by W. Hood, compiled for the U.S. Topographical Bureau and published in Doc. 58, Serial 222; with additional data from a map (1844) accompanying Doc. 1, Serial 611. (Spellings of names conform to the original map of 1837.)
as much as the mountains become bolder and spread over a greater range of country in this direction.

Having now passed the chain, the country becomes less abrupt, although it is much broken until we reach "Spring river," a distance of ninety miles; and in descending to and rising from the various watercourses, it will be necessary to grade in many places.

The watercourses are the "Barren Fork of Illinois," "Illinois," "Flint," "Sparnis," "Coweskin," "Lost creek," and "Silver creek," all fordable except in times of freshet, when but for a day or two their passage is prevented. This, however, is momentary, as their beds have such rapid falls the water soon runs off.

From "Spring river" to Fort Leavenworth, a distance of one hundred and fifty-eight miles, the route is over extensive rolling prairies, presenting no obstruction to a road direct from ford to ford on the intervening watercourses, except in some cases where the banks will have to be cut down.

These water courses are "Spring river," "Pomme de Terre," (the last of those contributing to the Arkansas), "Wildcat," "Mermiton," "Little Osage," "Cotton Wood creek," "Marias des Lygne," "Blue," and the "Kansas," tributaries to the Missouri. Of these, "Spring river," "Marias de Lygne," and the "Kansas," are the largest, and will require established ferries; although the two first are fordable generally, yet, as I understood the commissioners to have determined upon recommending the location of forts at these highly advantageous points, ferries will be necessary and easily protected; at the Kanzas there is one already established.

It may be found necessary to bridge over some of the watercourses named, either because it would be more advisable than to cut down both banks, or to preclude the possibility of delaying a march in times of freshets; in this event, timber is abundant, and in many places rock is at hand.

Finally, I will remark that the line run, as indicated on the map furnished, is but an experimental one; yet I extended my observation of either side sufficiently to be satisfied that the road can be made along the corrected line, marked on the map, without increase of difficulty or expense.17

Respectfully submitted,

CHARLES DIMMICK,18
United States Civil Engineer.

Another attempt was made during this period to decide the fate of Fort Gibson. Lt. Col. William Whistler and Capt. John Stuart, assigned to select a new site, toured the country along the Arkansas boundary in the late summer of 1837. It was their opinion that Fort Gibson should be retained because of its strategic location.

17. 25 Cong., 2 Sess., House Doc. 273 (Serial 325), pp. 6, 7.
18. Charles Dimmock's name is misspelled in the government document. The Kansas State Historical Society has blueprints of the original tracing by Charles Dimmock. According to the War Department (letter to the Society, May 12, 1959), the map was never lithographed and the original is the only one in their possession. The Society has, also, photostats of Surveyor Dimmock's field notes.

The original tracings were not drawn to scale. Even with the correlating information in the field notes, drawing a map indicating the route of the survey in relation to present-day geographical locations is an almost impossible task. One such drawing, made in the War Department in 1889, shows on a map of the 1889's the line of the 1837 survey from Fort Coffee to a point a few miles south of Fort Scott.
They suggested that the garrison at Fort Coffee could be enlarged; although they contended that the civilized Cherokees and Choctaws on the borders of Arkansas were not only peace-minded but were in themselves a protection to the frontier settlements. But the Arkansas delegation in congress was determined to have a military post near the state boundary. Lieutenant Colonel Whistler and Captain Stuart were requested to examine sites for this purpose. Reporting in December they suggested the old Fort Smith location and two other sites.

Meanwhile, the fact that the Western military force had not been strengthened was a matter of increasing concern to the frontier settlements. The regular army at this period numbered less than 7,000 troops. Fort Leavenworth with an aggregate of 431 officers and troops, Fort Gibson with 491 and Fort Jesup with 331, were the strongest garrisons on the frontier. Reviewing this situation in his annual report, the commander-in-chief of the army recommended enlarging the army to 15,000 to insure adequate military strength for the Western border. His recommendation was in line with the conclusions of other army men and Indian agents who during the summer of 1837 responded to inquiries of Sen. Lewis F. Linn and Rep. Albert G. Harrison of Missouri on the subject of military protection.

The senate by resolution on October 14, 1837, directed the Secretary of War to submit a plan of defense for the Western frontier and to report on the Indian population and the progress of the military road. The plan was introduced to the senate on January 3, 1838. It provided for a number of strong posts on the frontier to protect both the settlers and the Indians. It recommended, also, the establishment of an interior line of forts to serve as places of refuge in time of danger, and from which reinforcements could be summoned. It was the Secretary of War's opinion that the importance of the projected military road along the outer line of defense had been overestimated. He stressed the vulnerability of such a line of communication in time of war.

23. Included were a project for defense by Chief Engineer C. Gratiot and a report by Acting Quartermaster General Cross.—25 Cong., 2 Sess., House Doc. 49 (Serial 322). Another Western defense plan elaborately outlined, was presented by Major General Gaines.—25 Cong., 2 Sess., House Doc. 311 (Ser. 329).
Early in April congress authorized the Secretary of War to purchase a site for a fort on the western border of Arkansas. The acting quartermaster general in a letter to Secretary Poinsett, April 27, 1838, reported the purchase of the old Fort Smith site and the beginning of construction.

In 1838 some progress was made in completing the Western military road. In the late summer Captain Bonneville and Major Belknap were detailed to determine and mark out a road for the southern section (between Fort Smith and the Red river). After examining the country, they disagreed on the best route. A second survey by Major Belknap was approved by the War Department. On October 15 contracts for construction of the middle section were let at Independence, Mo., by Capt. George H. Crosman. Work was begun immediately. This was the portion between Fort Leavenworth and the Marais des Cygnes river crossing. Another development was the survey of the northern section (between Forts Snelling and Leavenworth) by Captains Boone and Canfield.

During the summer Maj. Charles Thomas and Capt. John Stuart of the Seventh U. S. infantry selected a site for a military post on the Illinois river just west of the Arkansas border about sixty miles north of Fort Smith. As a result of the reoccupation of the latter post Fort Coffee was ordered abandoned on October 19. At the end of the month its troops, commanded by Captain Stuart, were sent to establish "Camp Illinois" (later Fort Wayne) on the Illinois river.

By the end of the year the large-scale building program which had been started at Fort Smith was almost at a standstill. Secretary of War Poinsett explained to Rep. Archibald Yell of Arkansas that Indian disturbances in Florida and the Northwest required the services of most of the quartermaster officials. This, he pointed out, made it impossible to send officers to superintend construction projects on the Western frontier. Another handicap was the withdrawal of some War Department appropriations following the finan-
cial panic of 1837. Buildings at Fort Smith continued “in progress” for several years. Fort Gibson, always one of the strongest frontier garrisons, was also neglected during this period and for several succeeding years, despite the fact that it was in a dilapidated state.32

Early in 1839 Major Belknap, surveyor of the southern section of the road, was assigned to superintend its construction.33 Part of the route required little work and progress was rapid. Before the end of the year the entire 140-mile section had been finished.

At the new post on the Illinois river a dragoon camp relieved the infantry in February, 1839. In April Lieutenant Colonel Mason commanding four companies of the First U. S. dragoons was ordered to oversee construction of buildings.34

During the year the northern part of the middle section of the road was completed and contracts were let for the next eighty-six miles (from the Marais des Cygnes crossing to Spring river, in the Cherokee country).35

The Secretary of War commenting on the progress of the military road in his annual report for 1839 stated that the northern section required no construction further than marking out the most direct route.

In March, 1839, the senate by resolution requested that a report be presented to the next congress on the military and naval defenses of the country. A special board of War Department officers was convened in November to consider the subject. The brief section of their report, presented in March, 1840, relating to Western defense expressed agreement on all principal points with the plan of 1838. The officers urged the establishment of “an interior line of posts along the Western border of the States of Arkansas and Missouri, as auxiliaries to the advanced positions, and to restrain the intercourse between the whites and the Indians, and serve as rallying points for the neighboring militia in times of alarm.”36

The commissioner of Indian affairs estimated there were 61,000 warriors at this time within striking distance of the Western frontier. Of this huge force, however, only 17,500 were on the immediate frontiers of Arkansas and Missouri. The larger emigrant tribes

32. There was still talk of Fort Gibson’s removal to a more healthful site, and this uncertain status of the post was also a factor in its neglect.
34. Arkansas Gazette, May 29, 1839.
35. Probably in what is now Cherokee county, Kansas.
36. 26 Cong., 1 Sess., House Doc. 161 (Serial 366).
(Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws and Seminoles) west of Arkansas provided the majority of these warriors. West and northwest of Missouri were the smaller emigrant tribes of Pottawatomies, Iowas, Shawnees, Delawares, Sacs and Foxes, Kickapoos, Ottawas, and others. Added to these were the native Otoes and Missourias on the northwest (in the Platte river region) and the native Kansas and Osage Indians along the middle frontier.

A report by the Secretary of War in the spring of 1840 described what had been done in developing lines of communication and transportation from the interior to the frontier. Although movement of troops and supplies up the Red, Arkansas and Missouri rivers remained the most dependable system, the report pointed out the strategic location of the Western forts in relation to the highways crossing Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana. Many of these roads served military as well as civil purposes.\(^{37}\)

In the fore part of 1840 the middle section of the Western military road was completed to Spring river. This left 128 miles to be constructed either to Fort Smith or Fort Gibson. Although the southern section had been built from Fort Smith the terminus of the middle section was Fort Gibson.\(^{38}\) It was completed to that post by 1845. The highway between the Missouri and Arkansas rivers became known as the Fort Leavenworth-Fort Gibson military road. Up to January 1, 1841, a total of $85,876.27 had been spent on the three sections comprising the Western military road.\(^{39}\) A $5,000 appropriation in 1841 was probably the last fund applied to the project.\(^{40}\)

In June, 1840, construction of Fort Wayne on the Illinois river was suspended because of the unhealthfulness of the site. Two months later Lt. Col. R. B. Mason was ordered to abandon the post and move his troops to Fort Gibson. Another site was later selected some miles north, near Spavinaw creek, where by August, 1841, quarters were in an advanced state of preparation.

A senate resolution of January 11, 1841, requested a report from the Secretary of War on the frontier military strength and the advisability of an additional fort on the Missouri border between

---

37. Ibid.
38. A survey for the military road between Fort Gibson and Fort Wayne was made in 1841. Capt. Benjamin Alward assisted in the survey.—Gulick, G. W., Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy . . . to January 1, 1879 (New York, James Miller, 1879), v. 1, p. 414. The Arkansas general assembly presented to the senate in February, 1841, a request for opening a military road on a line from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Smith.—27 Cong., 2 Sess., Sen. Doc. 127 (Serial 415).
Forts Leavenworth and Wayne. The report, presented within the month, listed the aggregate army force at the Western forts as 1,844, of which 679 were dragoons. The chief engineer of the army and the acting quartermaster general believed a new army post between Forts Leavenworth and Wayne was essential. They suggested the place where the military road crossed the Marais des Cygnes river, 80 miles south of Fort Leavenworth, or the crossing at Spring river, 86 miles south of the Marais des Cygnes.

On December 21 while on a mission to the Indian country Gen. E. A. Hitchcock wrote the Secretary of War advocating the abandonment of Fort Wayne. Two weeks later while inspecting that military post he wrote again to the same effect. The post was unnecessary, he declared, both because the Cherokee Indians were peaceable and because of its proximity to Fort Smith, only eighty miles away. He proposed “the establishment of a post in what has been called the neutral ground (now belonging to the Cherokees) between the Osage Indians and the State of Missouri—at some point about 100 miles south of Fort Leavenworth; perhaps near where the Military road crosses the Marmiton would be a good site.” General Hitchcock’s suggestion for the abandonment of Fort Wayne was approved. On February 10, 1842, an order was issued for its evacuation and the selection of another site.

In March Gen. Zachary Taylor was directed to appoint a commission to select a location for the new post between Fort Wayne and Spring river. The members of the commission, Capt. B. D. Moore and Dr. J. R. Motte, an army surgeon, accompanied by a dragoon escort, left Fort Wayne on April 1, 1842. At the Spring river site they attempted to purchase land from John Rogers, a half-breed Cherokee Indian, but his price was prohibitive. After examining other sites the commissioners arrived at the home of “Col.” George Douglas who lived on the Marmaton river in Missouri. On April 9, accompanied by “Colonel” Douglas and Abram Redfield (also a Missouri settler), they reached a site near the military road crossing of the Marmaton and located “Camp” Scott, named in honor of Gen. Winfield Scott. The commissioners

42. See letter, Hitchcock to Secretary of War J. C. Spencer, January 9, 1842, in Foreman, Grant, ed., A Traveler in Indian Territory; the Journal of Ethan Allen Hitchcock . . . . (The Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1936), pp. 246-248.
43. Named by Secretary of War Spencer.—28 Cong., 1 Ses., Senate Report 186 (Serial 432), p. 5. It was known for several months as Camp Scott. This site was not within the Cherokee neutral lands, as implied by General Hitchcock, but was within territory assigned by treaty of 1838, to a number of Indian tribes from New York state (who did not emigrate to the West). No military reservation was laid out, however, and the government had no title to the land upon which the fort was built. The fort was abandoned in 1843. The buildings (without land) were sold at auction in May, 1855.

The first quarters were temporary log structures.\(^46\) Permanent buildings were started before the end of 1842. Capt. Thomas Swords of the First U. S. dragoons superintended the rather elaborate works, which were under construction until 1846. Some of the labor was supplied by carpenters, mechanics and masons from the adjoining Missouri settlements, but most of the work was done by troops. The quartermaster general’s report in December, 1844, stated:

At Fort Scott, the works are still in progress; they have been delayed in consequence of the troops being necessarily called off by other duty. Two blocks of officers’ quarters, with three sets of soldiers’ barracks, are nearly completed, and materials are ready for another set of officers’ quarters. If laborers can be obtained, the whole may be completed in a few months.\(^47\)

In the same report was a description of that part of the Western military road between the Missouri and Marmaton rivers:

The military road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Scott has been greatly injured during the past season by excessive rains. The bridges over many of the small streams have been destroyed. That over Sugar creek, twenty-eight miles north of Fort Scott, a substantial work two hundred and seventy-five feet in length, has been carried away. This road is highly important as a military communication; and, being the only direct route from the northwestern part of Missouri and Iowa to Arkansas and Texas, it has been much travelled, and those accustomed to use it will be put to great inconvenience by its present condition. I recommend that the bridges be replaced, and the road repaired by the labor of troops, so soon as a sufficient force can be spared for the purpose. If the troops perform the work, no appropriation will be required, as the tools and means of transportation at the frontier posts can be used.\(^48\)

Although Missouri had now both Fort Leavenworth and Fort Scott upon her western border the Missouri general assembly in 1843

\(^{44}\) Letter of Sgt. John Hamilton, April 24, 1872, in Kansas State Historical Society (Manuscripts division).

\(^{45}\) U. S. government records designate May 30, 1842, as the official date of the founding of Fort Scott.

\(^{46}\) Sgt. John Hamilton in his letter of April 24, 1872, \textit{loc. cit.}, says that he had finished structures for the commanding officer, a hospital, a quartermaster and commissary storehouse and other buildings, and had planted a garden, before the troops arrived.


\(^{48}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 147.
memorialized congress for a third post.\textsuperscript{49} The effort was unsuccessful.

Fort Scott was continued as a frontier post for nearly twelve years.\textsuperscript{50} Intended primarily as a check upon surrounding Indian tribes, particularly the Osage, its troops also patrolled the borders in an attempt to control illegal liquor traffic from the settlements to the Indians.\textsuperscript{51} Troop movements were frequent. There were expeditions to Indian encampments to quell threatened uprisings or to settle inter-tribal disputes. In 1843 dragoons from Fort Scott were among the troops escorting a trade caravan bound for Santa Fe. The fort's largest garrison was the First U. S. infantry with an aggregate strength of 444. Stationed there in 1846, most of the regiment was sent to fight in the Mexican War in 1847.

As the frontier advanced westward the importance of Fort Scott decreased. In 1852 present Fort Riley was established as Camp Center on the Kansas river at what was thought to be the head of navigation of that stream. The following year Fort Scott was abandoned.

The military road, however, continued for several years to be an important highway. In 1854 Kansas became a territory and a law enacted by the first Kansas territorial legislature (meeting in 1855) stated: "The road as now located and opened from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Scott, known as the military road, is hereby declared a territorial road."\textsuperscript{52} Within this decade other highways came to be more traveled. Only a few landmarks can be pointed out today as marking the route of the old Western military road in Kansas.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{49} 28 Cong., 1 Sess., House Doc. 30 (Serial 441).
\textsuperscript{50} Fort Scott was reestablished during the Civil War, serving as a military supply depot for Union forces from 1863 to 1865. During a later period (1860-1873) it was an army headquarters.
\textsuperscript{51} Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1843, p. 350 (report of R. A. Calloway, Osage superintendent, dated September 1, 1843).
\textsuperscript{52} Statutes of the Territory of Kansas, 1856, p. 956.
\textsuperscript{53} The territorial legislature of 1859 passed an act providing for the establishment of a number of roads, one of which connected Fort Leavenworth and Fort Scott, via the towns of Olathe, Paola and Mound City. This road has often been mistakenly referred to as the military road.—See, ibid., 1859, p. 555.
\textsuperscript{54} As originally surveyed in 1837, the entire section of the frontier military highway later known as the Fort Leavenworth-Fort Scott military road ran west of the Missouri state line. Maps of the latter 1850's show the road within R. 29 E from Fort Scott north to northern Johnson county before it turned northwest to Fort Leavenworth, but these maps vary considerably in locating certain portions of the highway. The Whitman and Sonr "Map of Eastern Kansas," published in 1856 independently of the public surveys then in progress, traced the road entirely within Kansas territory. Almost all the later maps (1857 to 1860) were compiled from land office surveys but they show variations of as much as five or six miles in certain sections of the route. Some traced the road into Missouri for a very short distance at the Johnson-Lykins (Miami) county line, and nearly all ran it into Missouri for a mile or two at the Lykins-Linn boundary (see cut opposite p. 192). The available Kansas maps of the 1850's do not show the road running south from Fort Scott toward Fort Gibson and Arkansas. This was because the region south was Indian land. It was not until the latter 1860's when these Indians by treaties began to give up their lands in exchange for other res-
Early Views of Fort Scott

Fort Scott was founded 100 years ago this month and several of the buildings are still standing. Sites of other buildings, long since razed, have been marked.

The buildings shown above were built in the early 1840's. The guardhouse (upper) was later used as a city jail before it was dismantled in 1906. Today the Fort Scott Museum, the Goodlander Children's Home and apartments occupy the three officers' quarters (below).
FORT LEAVENWORTH-FORT SCOTT MILITARY ROAD

The 1837 survey of the middle section of this road ran west of the Missouri state line. By the latter 1850's the actual highway, however, avoided some of the more difficult terrain by crossing into Missouri. The broken line shows the road as it appeared on a map of 1837. Other maps of the period show some variations. (See also, Footnote 54, pages 158, 126.)
ervations and concessions that this portion of Kansas was surveyed. The first plots for this area in the office of the state auditor are dated in 1860 and 1867. The surveyors designated the highway as the "Military Road—Fort Scott to Ark.," tracing it near the Missouri border through Crawford county, passing through the present towns of Arcadia and Mulberry. In Cherokee county the road swung a few miles to the west and left the state south of Baxter Springs. Although the military highway as shown on these plots may have little relation to the road of the 1840's, it nevertheless seems likely that some sections of the original were re-
tained in subsequent highway changes.

Rep. F. A. Jewell, Bourbon county, introduced a bill in the 1917 legislature to provide an appropriation "to write and publish a history of, and mark with monuments, the old military road in the state of Kansas. . . ." The proposal was turned down in committee.—See House Journal, Kansas, 1917, pp. 286, 306.