

= Fort Scott National Historic Site =

Fort Scott National Historic Site is a historical area under the control of the United States National Park Service in Bourbon County , Kansas , United States . Named after General Winfield Scott , who achieved renown during the Mexican @-@ American War , during the middle of the 19th century the fort served as a military base for US Army action in what was the edge of settlement in 1850 . For the next quarter century , it was used as a supply base and to provide security in turbulent areas during the opening of the West to settlement , a period which included Bleeding Kansas and the American Civil War .

The current national historic site protects 20 historic structures , a parade ground , and five acres ( 20 @,@ 000 m <sup>2</sup> ) of restored tallgrass prairie , inside the city of Fort Scott . It is open to visitors most days of the year .

= = History = =

In 1842 , Fort Scott was named after Winfield Scott , was established on the American frontier on the military road in eastern Kansas between Fort Leavenworth and Fort Gibson . It was established to provide protection to the rapidly increasing number of settlers , who were migrating from the Eastern United States . Fort Scott became one of a chain of forts intended to protect the new settlers from the Plains Indians , as well as to protect the Indians from the settlers ' encroachment .

The United States government intention to reserve permanent Indian lands west of the Missouri River gave way to the competition of settlers continuing to encroach on the Indian settlements . Fort Scott 's most active days were between 1842 and 1853 , although it was also used during the Civil War .

= = = Army days = = =

The Cherokee of Indian Territory ( now Oklahoma ) were upset to have Fort Wayne in their proximity . After some delay , the US Army decided to abandon Fort Wayne and move its soldiers to a new fort to be built between Fort Leavenworth and the site . The Army both wanted to placate the Cherokee ( who were supervised by the Department of Defense ) and provide more defense for white settlers and other Indians against the Osage , who had been conducting frequent raids in the area . On April 1 , 1842 , some soldiers of Fort Wayne left their fort and on April 22 arrived where Fort Scott would be built , in the Osage Cuestas section of modern @-@ day Kansas . After haggling with the Cherokees to acquire the land , the rest of Fort Wayne 's garrison left the fort on May 26 and arrived at the Fort Scott site on May 30 .

Unlike most forts for military use , the fort did not have defensive walls or structures when first built ; the wide @-@ open area and the available artillery made an enclosed fort unnecessary . The soldiers concentrated on building structures for lodging the men , animals , and equipment . These buildings were on the edges of a 350 @-@ foot ( 110 m ) parade ground .

The post quartermaster , Captain Thomas Swords , was in charge of building Fort Scott 's structures , and had to deal with the problems of construction on the Kansas prairie , which had few trees . He had only two bricklayers and three carpenters to rely on , as there were few civilians and most of the soldiers had other duties to perform . Wood was available , but the mill was built 1 @.@ 5 miles ( 2 @.@ 4 km ) away , making transport time consuming . Swords found his efforts plagued by lack of wood , skilled labor and working equipment . Freak accidents destroyed much of the wood intended for the fort 's construction . As a result , only one duplex of the five planned officers quarters ( four duplexes and post commandant 's house ) was built by 1844 , and the intended enlisted barracks were not completed . In his 1844 inspection of the fort , Colonel George Croghan reported that , in comparison to other frontier forts , he considered Fort Scott " above average " .

Due to the rising tensions that escalated in the Mexican @-@ American War , the US Army redeployed troops to the Southwest . With Fort Scott still uncompleted , officials decided on April 25 , 1850 , that no more construction would be done there , after eight years and \$ 35 @,@ 000 . By

the time it was finished , it was obsolete ; three years later , it was abandoned by the military in favor of the more western Fort Riley .

For the average soldier , life at the fort was " monotonous " . Until the permanent structures were built , soldiers had to live in tents , which lacked comfort . Aside from a few whiskey peddlers and prostitutes , few civilians lived at the fort . Officers had brought their personal slaves with them , including Captain Swords . Five miles East in Missouri was a grog shop that supplied soldiers , and quite a few courts @-@ martial followed soldiers ' going AWOL at the shop . The desertion rate from the fort ranged from 12 % -16 % , due to boredom , irregular pay , and hatred for military life . As no combat took place near the fort , it seemed more of a frontier village than a military base . Hunting was a popular pastime ; according to Captain Swords , " wolf chasing and duck hunting " was the only way one officer could tolerate the place .

= = = Bleeding Kansas = = =

Two years after the army abandoned the fort , the buildings were sold by auction to civilians , with two being converted to hotels . In 1854 the Kansas @-@ Nebraska Act repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820 , which had kept slavery out of Kansas . Missourians in favor of slavery soon moved to Kansas to try to sway the vote of whether or not Kansas would permit slavery . Settlers from New England arrived equally determined to keep it out . Each of the two competing factions of the Bleeding Kansas conflict claimed one of the hotels at Fort Scott : Free @-@ Soil at the Fort Scott Hotel and Pro @-@ Slavery at the Western Hotel . Most of the residents in Fort Scott supported slavery , but those outside the town tended to the free @-@ soil side . During this time , there were local incidents of murder and attempted arson , typical elements of the guerrilla conflicts that were prevalent in the fighting .

= = = Army returns = = =

During the American Civil War , the fort was renewed as a US military post . In August 1861 , the Union Army took command of Fort Scott , and readied it for the war times . The United States Army also took over several blocks within the town for commissary and quartermaster functions . The Union Army rented the properties from the current civilian owners . Troops from Indiana , Iowa , Colorado , Ohio , and Wisconsin would come to the fort , and either stayed by the fort , or traveled farther , to subjugate Missouri , Arkansas , or the Indian Territory . Fort Scott was one of the few installations that recruited and trained black soldiers for the United States Colored Troops of the Union Army .

A major supply depot was situated at the fort . Confederate general Sterling Price hoped to capture the town , but the closest the Confederate force came to the garrison was 10 miles ( 16 km ) away at Battle of Dry Wood Creek . The site was strategically important as it was within a Southern @-@ sympathizing area and close to the Confederate state of Arkansas and the " unstable " Indian Territory ( present @-@ day state of Oklahoma ) , where many of the members of the Five Civilized Tribes were allied with the Confederates . The fort served as a " general hospital " ( large military hospital ) and prison until after the war . Following the end of the war , in October 1865 the US Army left the facilities and sold off by auction what they controlled .

On January 14 , 1870 , the Army returned with the formation of the Post of Southeast Kansas . The Post was based at Fort Scott , but the soldiers camped along the rail tracks , and seldom used the original fort . They were sent to protect the railroads and workers from settlers . Some of the latter feared that the railroad , which had been awarded land for development by the US Government in rights @-@ of @-@ way , would evict them from their squatter homes . The settlers considered the troops lackeys to the railroads , and lumped both as enemies .

Settlers also had some continuing conflicts with Indians and insurgents using the recent Confederate cause as excuse for robbery . By the spring of 1873 , the US Army withdrew the troops from Fort Scott for good . From 1873 to 1965 , the buildings of the fort were left unattended , and slowly deteriorated . Many military buildings were razed and replaced with structures built for civilian

use .

= = Modern times = =

With the Act of August 31 , 1965 , the National Park Service gave the city government of Fort Scott , Kansas the necessary funds and technical knowledge to restore the fort .

On October 19 , 1978 , Fort Scott became a National Historic Site under the supervision of the National Park Service , encompassing 17 acres ( 69 @, @ 000 m<sup>2</sup> ) . Today the fort is open throughout the year , save for Thanksgiving , Christmas , and New Years Day . Visitation has declined in recent years . In 2005 visitation was 25 @, @ 528 ; in 2007 it was 22 @, @ 314 .

Surviving structures include four officers ' barracks , one dragoon 's barracks , two infantry barracks , a hospital , guardhouse , dragoon stables , ordnance and post headquarters , quartermaster stables , bake shop , flagpole , and magazine . Another feature of the park is 5 acres ( 2 @. @ 0 ha ) of tallgrass prairie restored as part of an ecology @-@ restoration project .