

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Fort Belknap
AND/OR COMMON
Fort Belknap State Park

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER one mile south of junction of Texas
24 and 251
CITY, TOWN Newcastle
STATE Texas
VICINITY OF
COUNTY Young
CODE 48
CODE 503
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 17th
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Young County Commissioners
STREET & NUMBER County Courthouse - Elm Street
CITY, TOWN Graham
STATE Texas
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. County Clerk - Young County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER P. O. Box 218
CITY, TOWN Graham
STATE Texas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE None
DATE
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Fort Belknap, anchor of a chain of forts stretching from the Red River to the Rio Grande, was founded on June 24, 1851. Brevet Brigadier General William Goldsmith Belknap, assisted by Captain Randolph Barnes Marcy, selected the original site on the Red or Salt Fort of the Brazos River in present Young County about ten miles below Marcy's California Road and about the same distance above the confluence of the Clear Fork with the Brazos River.

The buildings erected in 1851 were of logs. The first of these was the commissary store, measuring 18 by 180 feet. In subsequent years the following buildings were completed of native sandstone: the commissary store, the magazine, the bakery, six infantry quarters, and the corn house. Other buildings of jacales were the officer's quarters, the hospital, the billiard room and the company kitchen. There was also constructed the stable built in picket style and the saw mill.

The fort is now a county park administered in cooperation with the Fort Belknap Society. The only original structure on the site is the arsenal, built in 1852. It has been re-roofed, but the original walls are still standing. The other structures, all of stone construction with shingled roofs, are reconstructions carefully built by the State on the original foundations as part of the Texas Centennial observance in 1936. There are six such replicas, these include: The Commissary (photo #1) is the central building of the Fort Belknap complex. A two-story structure with gabled roof, the building now houses the local museum. The floors of this building are original. To the east of the commissary sits an original well which still furnishes water. The general oversight and management of the two museums and the archives that have grown up at the fort are in the care of the Fort Belknap Society. In the commissary are various artifacts consisting of tools, weapons, including an extensive collection of arrowheads, and furniture used mainly on the Fort Belknap frontier. Of special interest are the pictures of the former officers stationed at the fort.

The barracks (photos #2 and 3) are identical buildings constructed as are all the buildings of the fort of local fabric, sandstone. These buildings are one-story structures with gabled roofs. The Fort Belknap Archives of Western America was founded and endowed by Mrs. Ben G. Oneal in 1961, and is jointly sponsored by the Fort Belknap Society and Texas Wesleyan College. This collection of materials is housed in the barracks and includes some rare documents, copies of military records concerning the fort during its active existence.

Arsenal - The original arsenal was constructed in 1852. It is a one-story stone structure with gabled roof. The arsenal is presently called the "Chapel of Peace."

The kitchen (photo #4) sits to the northwest of the barracks. It is a modest one-story building with gabled roof. It is also constructed of sandstone.

| PERIOD | | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1851

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Established in 1851 following the Mexican War when the Texas frontier was being ravished by Comanche-Kiowa raids, Fort Belknap became the key post in a chain of outer border posts to protect the exposed frontier. The exceptional value of Fort Belknap rests upon its role in the protection of the Texas frontier during the years of its most active advance, 1850-1865. Of the forts that made up the "outer ring" in these years, Fort Belknap bore the brunt of the Kiowa-Comanche assault, and originated the military offensives that, on occasion, carried retaliation to the Indian homeland.

Young County, in cooperation with the Fort Belknap Society, administers part of the fort site as a county park. The remainder of the site has been lost in surrounding farm lands. The park was developed in 1936 by the State of Texas with Federal monies made available for observance of the Texas Centennial. The only surviving structure of the original fort is the arsenal, built in 1852. The park is open throughout the year to visitors.

HISTORY

Following the annexation of Texas and the Mexican War, the demands of settlers on the north Texas frontier for protection against Kiowa and Comanche raids from the north and west became so insistent that the government at last took action and laid out a chain of forts. They were Forts Graham (1848), Worth (1849), Gates (1849), Croghan (1849), and Mason (1849). Before these forts had even been completed, however, the frontier of settlement had advanced farther north and west. General William G. Belknap, therefore, was sent to survey the frontier and select sites for another system of forts. These were Forts Belknap (1851), Phantom Hill (1851), Chadbourne (1852), McKavett (1852), and Clark (1852). There were thus an inner and an outer ring of fortifications enclosing the settlement during the 1850's.

Throughout the 1850's the Texas frontier was the object of repeated destructive raids by Kiowas and Comanches. One-fifth of the United States Army, often bolstered with Texas Rangers and state troopers, attempted to defend it against the Indians. On the outer ring, Fort Belknap was the key link in the chain, thrust, as it was,

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Conklin, R.P. and M.B., The Butterfield Overland Mail (Glendale, 1947).
 Haley, Evetts, Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman (Norman, 1949).
 Oneal, "The Beginnings of Fort Belknap," Southwestern Historical Quarterly,
 (Norman, 1949).
 Richardson, R.N., The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement, (Glendale, 1949).
 Rister, C.C., The Southwestern Frontier, 1865-1881, (Cleveland, 1928).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 15.3

UTM REFERENCES EG 2/25/97

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-------------|--------------------------|---------|---|------|-------------|--------------------------|---------|
| A | 1 5 | 5 2 4 2 9 0 | 3 8 3 7 0 4 0 | 3667940 | B | 1 5 | 5 2 4 2 9 0 | 3 6 3 7 2 5 0 | 3667720 |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | |
| C | 1 5 | 5 2 4 0 5 0 | 3 6 3 7 0 4 0 | 3667940 | D | 1 5 | 5 2 4 0 6 0 | 3 6 3 7 2 5 0 | 3667720 |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Joseph Scott Mendinghall - Historian

ORGANIZATION

National Park Service, Historic Sites Survey

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

9/20/83

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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Fort Belknap

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The Corn House (photo #5) is the other museum of the Fort Belknap State Park. This museum is dedicated to the commemoration of women and contains primarily ladies gowns. Among the collection are dresses which belonged to the first ladies of Texas as well as Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower's gown, worn by her at the Waldorf-Astoria upon the general's return in World War II.

The Fort Belknap Society has constructed a very attractive cottage (see accompanying photo #6) for the keeper of the grounds. This cottage does sit within the historic boundaries but does not contribute to the national significance of the landmark. Moreover there are a number of other sites located in the boundaries. The numerous sites include the Cox Grape Arbor, numerous cannons, various monuments and markers and other identified sites of buildings, though there are no present foundations.

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Fort Belknap

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

northward towards the Kiowa-Comanche country. Judging from the catalog of Indian attacks perpetrated in the vicinity of the post during the decade of the 1850's, the garrison was inadequate to protect that segment of the frontier. In 1858, however, a squadron of the Second Cavalry under Major Earl Van Dorn rode north from Fort Belknap, established a temporary camp, Radziminski, on Otter Creek in Indian Territory, and from there located and severely defeated a large village of Comanches at the battle of Rush Springs. In 1852, Fort Belknap served as base for the exploration of the upper Red River country conducted by Captain R. B. Marcy and Lt. George B. McClellan.

Around the fort the settlement of Fort Belknap grew up. Between 1858 and 1861, it was an important station on the Butterfield Overland stage route. At this time, the fort was commanded by Major George H. Thomas.

Nearby were two small reservations where lived the Wichita and affiliated tribes of friendly Indians. In 1859 the settlers, hostile towards all Indians, forced the government to move these Indians to Indian Territory, where they were located on the Wichita Reserve at Fort Cobb and, subsequently, at the Anadarko Agency. Before the move, local settlers took matters into their own hands and attacked the Wichitas. Several skirmishes were fought before orders came for the removal of the Indians. They were escorted north by a squadron of the Second Cavalry, under Major Thomas.

On the outbreak of the Civil War, Fort Belknap, together with all other Texas forts, was evacuated by U.S. troops. It continued, however, to play a vital role in frontier defense. Troops of the Texas Frontier Regiment used it throughout the war as a base for operations against the Kiowas and Comanches, and for protection of surrounding settlements.

After the Civil War, U.S. troops reoccupied the Texas forts. Fort Belknap, because of the unreliable water supply, was soon discontinued as a permanent post (1867), although small detachments were based there from time to time for protection of the mail road and during periods of particularly intense Indian raiding activity. Fort Richardson, to the east, took over Belknap's role in frontier defense. A small body of soldiers garrisoned the fort in 1871 when General William T. Sherman visited it on his famous inspection of the Texas frontier. The next day, between Belknap and Fort Richardson, he narrowly escaped death at the hands of a Kiowa raiding party that massacred the Warren wagon train, which was following the Sherman group. This episode, the "Jacksboro Incident," led to the arrest of Satanta and Big Tree and their unprecedented trial in a Texas State court. After the subjugation of the Kiowas and Comanches in 1874-75, Fort Belknap fell into disuse, and ultimately, ruins.

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Fort Belknap

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Fort Belknap sits in a well defined area. Though the original fortification was larger than the present area, the integrity of the original site has been lost.

Commencing from the intersection of State Route 61 and the north boundary of the Fort Belknap State Park proceed in a westerly direction, following a stone wall a distance of approximately 1,000 feet, thence proceed due south, following this same wall a distance of 1,000 feet, thence proceed in an easterly direction to a point of intersection with the western edge of the right of way of State Route 61, thence north to the point of origin.