

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

SEP 28 1983

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Fort Sill

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATIONSTREET & NUMBER
On Highway 62CITY, TOWN
Fort Sill

VICINITY OF Lawton

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

4th

STATE
Oklahoma 73503CODE
40COUNTY
ComancheCODE
031**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☐ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☒ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC
☐ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
☒ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ COMMERCIAL
☐ EDUCATIONAL
☐ ENTERTAINMENT
☐ GOVERNMENT
☐ INDUSTRIAL
☒ MILITARY
☒ MUSEUM
☐ PARK
☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Administered by U.S. Department of the Army:
Mr. Gillette Griswold, Director, Fort Sill Museum

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Fort Sill

VICINITY OF

STATE
Oklahoma 73503**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Registry of Deeds, Comanche County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
LawtonSTATE
Oklahoma**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Division of Engineers

DATE

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Fort SillCITY, TOWN
Fort SillSTATE
Oklahoma 73503

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

XX EXCELLENT
___GOOD
___FAIR

___DETERIORATED
___RUINS
___UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

___UNALTERED
XX ALTERED

CHECK ONE

XX ORIGINAL SITE
___MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Much of the original fortification of Fort Sill built during the early 1870's remains. There are more than 50 buildings dating from this early period. Many of these structures are still in use by the Army. These structures, built of native limestone, include residences for officers and non-commissioned officers on two sides of the parade ground, the barracks, the quartermaster's storehouse, the commissary, guardhouse, and the old stone corral. There are, likewise, a number of structures of later vintage also in use by the Fort Sill Museum.

1. Sherman House (Building 422) is located on the north side of the parade ground. The first occupants of the house were Brevet Major General and Mrs. Benjamin Henry Grierson. The house receives its name from General-of-the-Army William Tecumseh Sherman who narrowly escaped death there while in peace conference with Stumbling Bear who fired an arrow at the General. A two-story limestone building with enclosed frame porch, Sherman House has four bedrooms, three baths, living room, parlor, dining room, breakfast room, kitchen, laundry room, and orderly room.

2. Chief of Staff Quarters (Building 424) like the Sherman House next door was one of the earliest buildings constructed. This is a 1-1/2 story structure with a gabled roof with hipped roof dormers, and interior end chimneys.

3. Old Post Quarters (Building 431) is on Chickasha Road facing the enlisted men's barracks. These duplex cottages have dormers with gabled roofs and enclosed frame porches. Excluding the Sherman House and Quarters 423, all the officers quarters were duplexes. The piazzas of the officers quarters were the only means of air conditioning during the early days; today window units are installed in them. Each of the quarters of the duplex houses contain four bedrooms, three baths, living room, dining room, kitchen, laundry room, and store room.

4. The Old Post Chapel (Building 425) is the oldest house of worship in continuous use in the State of Oklahoma. This chapel was constructed in 1875 at the time that Major General Ranald S. Mackenzie was the Post Commander. This small limestone building has a gabled roof. The west wing was a later addition fashioned from stones from the latrines behind the Officers Quarters.

5. The Barracks (Buildings 435 through 443) occupy the south and west sides of the parade ground.

On the southeast corner of the parade ground is the Hall of Flags. This building was originally constructed as the quartermaster's storehouse, then was used as a barracks. The offices of the museum are located there today. The barracks on the west side of the parade ground house Army printing facilities and a laundry room. On the southwest corner of the parade ground is the library of the museum.

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1870-1890

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

History

Probably the most important and best known southwestern frontier military fort, Fort Sill was established near the Wichita Mountains in 1869 to control the Kiowas and Comanche Indians subdued by General P. H. Sheridan's winter campaign of 1868-69. In 1834, the dragoon expedition under Colonel Henry Dodge had camped on the site of the future post and conferred with the Comanches. In 1859, Captain R. B. Marcy had also visited the site and recommended that a fort be built there. But not until 1869 was the decision finally made, by command of General Sheridan on the recommendation of General B. H. Grierson, to found a post on the site.

The spike was driven on January 8, 1869. General Sheridan had personally held the first stake. The plan for the post was also the personal brainchild of General Sheridan. The camp was first called Camp Wichita and Camp Medicine Bluff because it was located near the cliff formation which was the sacred Indian burial grounds. The name of the fortification was changed on July 2, 1869, to Fort Sill to honor Sheridan's West Point classmate General Joshua Sill, who had been killed while leading the charge of one of General Sheridan's brigades at the Battle of Stones River.

Construction of the fort was under the direction of Lieutenant R. H. Pratt, who later founded the Carlisle Indian School. The work on the stone fort was all accomplished by the Black soldiers of the 10th Cavalry. Fort Sill stands a lasting memorial to the efforts of these "Buffalo Soldiers." The earliest buildings were constructed at almost no cost to the federal government. Materials were taken from local quarries and all labor was done by soldiers. The completion of the first set of buildings took seven years because of the frequent interruption by bands of Indians as well as whites who pillaged the Oklahoma-Texas order area.

By 1870, President Grant had instituted his Peace Policy. This program shifted the responsibility for the safety of the Indians to the Department of the Interior. Indian agencies and representatives were sent to the west. The first Indian Agent

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 142

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	4
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5	5	6	7	6	0
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3	8	3	6	9	1	0
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B

1	4
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5	5	6	8	1	0
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3	8	3	6	6	4	0
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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 Original Form prepared by Joseph Mendinghall; altered by

NAME/TITLE Marilyn Larew, Historian
Cecil McKithan, Historian

ORGANIZATION
Historic Sites Survey

DATE
November 1978

STREET & NUMBER
Pension Building

TELEPHONE
343-6402

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 ☐

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

LOCAL ☐ Dec 19, 1960
Landmark Dec 19, 1960
Designated Dec 19, 1960
Boundary Certified Dec 19, 1960
DATE Dec 19, 1960

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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6. The Old Post Corral (Building 160) is the southern most building of the old fort complex. The corral is completely enclosed by an 8 foot limestone wall with brick buttresses. Stables line the interior wall. On the south interior wall of the corral are offices of museum personnel, and a gift shop. There are numerous artifacts and displays throughout the corral.

7. The Guardhouse (Building 336) was also called the "Geronimo Hotel" because the famous Apache chief was confined there. The building, completed in 1873, is one story high with hipped roof on a high raised foundation. The walls of the basement are three feet thick. In this building are located various exhibits that commemorate the history making men of the old southwest--soldiers and Indians.

8. Hamilton Hall (Building 346) was built as the Quartermaster's Storehouse after the conversion of the former building to barracks. Today the building contains exhibits of Army artillery from the Revolutionary Period up to 1900. The building, named in honor of General Alexander Hamilton, contains battleflags, uniforms, muskets, paintings, models, horse equipment, and other early military artifacts. The building is one-story high on a raised foundation, with a gable roof with two dormers over the center entrance to the building.

9. McLain Hall (Building 345) is the sister building to Hamilton Hall, containing exhibits dating from 1900 to the war in Vietnam. After having been closed for several years, the building was re-opened in July of 1975. Constructed of limestone, like Hamilton Hall, McLain Hall is one-story high on raised foundation with gabled roof. In front of this building is the Cannon Walk which links this section of gun halls with the old guardhouse a block away.

10. The Old Post Hospital (Building 467) is connected to the new Post Hospital by a columnade. Constructed during the early 1870's, the hospital has a two-story central block with wings on the north, east, and west sides. It is still in use.

11. Ambrosia Spring provided the central water supply for Fort Sill. Since water was always a problem in the arid southwest a spring house where water could be stored to be pumped up the hill to the fort was constructed in 1884 and is named after Ambrosia Elvira Taylor, wife of Major M.K. Taylor.

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Flipper's Ditch was built in 1878 in an effort to solve the malaria problem plaguing Fort Sill. The ditch system was designed and engineered by Second Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper and constructed under his supervision. Fort Sill was surrounded by ponds, marshes, and lowland bottoms, creating a situation that was highly conducive to the growth and spread of malaria germs. The result was a malaria epidemic at the fort. As a partial solution to this problem, it was recommended that a ditch drainage system be constructed. Flipper was assigned to carry out the task.

The system drained the swamps and marshes, principally those to the north and west of the fort, into Cache Creek. Marshes to the southwest of the post were drained into a small tributary creek which ran eastward, filtering into Cache. The ponds to the south of the post emptied directly into Cache Creek. The westernmost marshes were to be drained in two directions. One was westward into the creek into which the marshes west of the post were drained. The other direction was eastward into an adjoining pond draining marshes in that region. Existing drains dug in 1873, east of the post were cleared out (not being of sufficient depth and consistency and having become overgrown with weeds), and incorporated into the larger system.

The drainage system is constructed of native rock and stone and cement. The rock and stone were obtained from a plateau quarry located adjacent to the old garrison. The main arterial system, "Flipper's Ditch," located approximately three quarters of a mile northwest of the old garrison boundary, is well constructed and still serves to channel the Medicine Creek overflow during the rainy season.

Building 321 (Quarters): Recent investigations undertaken in the summer of 1976 have revealed that this structure contains nothing of the early pickett-type building originally located on the site as was suspected. For this reason, it is not within the boundaries, this building does not contribute to the national significance of the landmark. (New data from telephone conversation sometime during July 1976 between Ben Levy, Senior Historian, Historic Sites Survey, and Gillett Griswold and Dale Durham, Fort Sill.)

✓ An other building which is an intrusion in the historic district is Building 460, the Officer's Club, constructed in the 1930's. Conversation with Beth Grosvenor concluded that the area around this building should be included within the NHL boundary, so as not to physically separate the historic hospital complex from the structures around the parade ground.

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To the east and north of the parade ground complex is an open space that is included within the historic district because it is related to the original historic setting of the post. The buildings around the parade ground were constructed on a bluff for defense and to give an unobstructed view of the surrounding plains to the posts guards stationed at the picket houses (Buildings 372 & 380) who kept watch for hostile Indians. Several times in the early 1870's Indians attacked the post attempting to steal horses from the post's remount herd. This necessitated the construction of the corral complex and picket houses in response to the Indian raids. This open space is important from the standpoints that inclusion within the historic district preserves the last remanent of original historic setting (as stated by the Director of the Fort Sill Museum, who requested its inclusion), and it provides the connecting physical link between the parade ground complex of structures and the corral complex of structures.

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at Fort Sill was Lawrie Tatum, a Quaker, convinced of the theory of "conquests through kindness." During this time, repressive actions against Indians were halted unless requested by the agent. Also, troops stationed in Texas were forbidden to take action in the Indian Territory.

As had been Indian custom, braves had to show their status as warriors by feats of courage in war. During the summer, raids were frequent on the Texas frontier. Because of the vast distances and the fleetness of the Indian ponies, troops from Texas and Fort Sill had little success in protecting this area. Finally in 1871 General Sherman lifted the sanctuary status of the Indian territory. At this same time, news was received of the massacre of a wagon-train at Fort Richardson, Texas. General Randal S. Mackenzie and his 4th Cavalry were given the task of bringing the raiding parties back to Fort Sill. Upon arriving at the fort, General Sherman found the war-party there. A conference was held on the porch of the Grierson House. At this meeting Sherman almost lost his life. The house then became known as Sherman House. This conference organized the peace chiefs. However, there were still some thousand hostiles remaining.

The subsequent years saw the activities of the Red River campaign which through constant pursuit gave the Indians no rest. Upon the conclusion of the campaign, Fort Sill became the center for registration of Indians in the Southern District of the Oklahoma Territory as well as the newly arriving white settlers. Fort Sill continued as a major guard station and held such famous prisoners of war as the legendary Geronimo. By the turn of the century Fort Sill had doubled in size and in 1902 the 29th Battery of Field Artillery arrived at the fort. This began the role of Fort Sill as an artillery school which has lasted until today.

Importantly related to the history of Fort Sill is Henry Ossian Flipper, the first Black man to graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point, who in spite of virtual social isolation, completed his course of study and graduated on June 14, 1877. Flipper was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Tenth Cavalry Regiment on June 15, 1877, and was assigned to Fort Sill, Indian Territory, Oklahoma, on January 1, 1878.

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While at Fort Sill, Flipper was responsible for the construction of a drainage system that became known as "Flipper's Ditch." Although the fort was situated on a high plateau at the junction of two streams, its water supply was unhealthy and a series of shallow ponds extended from Fort Sill to Red River, a distance of more than forty miles. These ponds filled with water during the rainy season and remained stagnant most of the year. There was much malaria in the camp and many soldiers died of it. In his book, Negro Frontiersman, Flipper described the construction of the ditch as follows:

One time when the ponds were dry and before the rains set in, General Davidson detailed me to dig a ditch and drain them. He gave me a full Troop of Cavalry and I went down, made my surveys and estimates and came back and reported to him. He then ordered a Troop of Cavalry to report to me every Sunday morning, relieving the one that had worked the week before. I finished the ditch and the Commanding Officer and other officers went down to look it over. We got down in the ditch and the General told me I had it running up hill and that the grade was wrong. It certainly looked that way, but I knew I was right. You stand on a level street and you look along it and it seems to rise and grow narrower, although you know it is of uniform width and level. However, I put the instrument on it and convinced him it was all right. When the rains came, the water flowed away perfectly and there never were any more ponds. The health of the Post improved wonderfully. I have been told the ditch is still there and is known as "Flipper's Ditch."

Flipper remained at Fort Sill until 1880 although he had short intervening details to Forts Elliott, Concho, Davis, and Quitman in Texas. He was his regiment's first Black officer. His duties as Post Signal Officer and Post Adjutant involved surveying, handling mail, building roads, telegraph wires, scouting on the Staked Plains, and service in the campaign against the Indian Chief Victorio in addition to his construction of the Post drainage system.

On August 13, 1881, Colonel William Shafter, Commanding Officer, wrote to the Adjutant General that he had not received funds supposed to have been mailed by Flipper. Lieutenant Flipper was arrested and his quarters searched. However, Flipper maintained that the funds had been stolen and that he had entrusted the mail to a civilian employee. On August 29, 1881, Colonel Shafter wrote to the

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General that Lieutenant Flipper had made good all the money he was responsible for. He was held for General Court Martial charged with embezzling public funds and conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman. Flipper was tried on November 4, 1881, and was found not guilty of embezzlement, but guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman. As a result he was dismissed from the U.S. Army on June 30, 1882.

Flipper believed wholeheartedly that his dismissal stemmed from two elements: firstly, that his commanding officer personally disliked him, and secondly, that his friendship with Mollie Dwyer, a young white woman who was the sister-in-law of a white officer at the Post, had made him some enemies who actively campaigned for his dismissal. Embarrassed and pained over his dismissal, Flipper remained in the Southwest where he settled in El Paso on the Texas-Mexico border in 1882. He began work as a surveyor for the A. O. Wingo Company in Chihuahua, Mexico, in 1883. From 1883 until 1891, he was chief engineer for mining companies in Sonora, Mexico, and he compiled maps, surveyed land and monuments, and studied Mexican and Spanish codes, laws and statutes.

In 1891, Flipper settled in Nogales, Arizona Territory, where he was hired by the town to present their land claim case before the Court of Private Land Claims. His testimony and accurate knowledge of Spanish laws and land claims resulted in the success of the case (*Ainsa v. U.S.* 868, U.S. 208). This victory won Flipper an appointment as Special Agent for the Department of Justice. For eleven years Flipper worked in this capacity and he translated, arranged, and published a collection of Spanish and Mexican laws.

Aside from his engineering feats, Flipper was an avid history student and writer. His published works are:

The Colored Cadet at West Point. (New Yor:Arno Press, 1969),
(Biographical foreward by Sara Dunlap Jackson)

Negro Frontiersman, The Western Memories of Henry O. Flipper.

Edited by Theodore D. Harris. (El Paso:Texas Western College, 1963)
(Sequel to previous book covering years 1878-1916).

Mexico Laws, Statutes, etc. (Nogales: A.T. Press of L. Aquire, 1892)

Venezuela Laws, Statutes, etc. (Caracas:Antepac Petroleum Company, 1925)

Last Manuscript - Did a Negro Discover Arizona and New Mexico?

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Flipper, Henry O., Negro Cadet at West Point, New York, 1968.

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Parcel 1

Beginning at the juncture of Medicine Creek and the eastern boundary of Fort Sill, as it parallels US highway 277 (in the northeast corner of the boundary), the boundary line runs south along the posts east boundary for 2500' to Corral Road. The boundary then turns west along Corral Road for 700' to its intersection with Randolph Road. Then north on Randolph Road for 500' to its intersection with Knox Road. From there the boundary turns east for 300' then north for 400' and then east for 150', to enclose Buildings 361 & 362. At this point the boundary arcs around the 1930's Officers Quarters facing Hudnutt Ave, for 1000' until it intersects with the access road behind the Officer's Quarters facing Chickasha Road. The boundary goes south on the access road to Randolph Road for 200', then south on Randolph Road for about 600'. At this point the boundary cuts east, north of Building 321, around the water tower (Building 328M), north of Building 324, for 1000', and then northwest for 400' (between Buildings 144 & 143) to Randolph Road. The boundary continues northwest on Randolph Road for 300', then due south for 700' and west for 200' to Geronimo Road. The boundary heads due north on Geronimo Road for 800' and continues north along Isbell Road (behind the Barracks Buildings 441-449) for another 900' to Building 461. The boundary goes around the original hospital complex (Buildings 461, 466, 467, 468, 469 and 470), to the access road behind the hospital complex, then east on the access road for 800' to Building 413, a modern structure which is excluded from the boundary. To the east of Building 413 the boundary goes north to the Medicine Creek for 400' and then follows the creek for 1000' to its starting point.

Parcel 2

Flippers Ditch is located three quarters of a mile northwest of the old Fort Sill Historic District. The ditch runs through a heavily wooded area across Upton Road and is approximately 500 yards in length. The boundary is coterminous with the exterior limits of the ditch.

UTM 14.555040, 3837020