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Headquarters Records
of Fort Scott, Kansas
1869-1873



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Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands
1821-1920

Record Group 393

Headquarters Records of Fort Scott, Kansas 1869-1873

Headquarters records of Fort Scott, Kans., 1869-73, are reproduced on the two rolls of this microfilm publication. The records are part of Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group (PG) 393, and consist of letters sent, endorsements sent, a register of letters received, letters received, and general and special orders.

History

This post, the site of which is now within the limits of the city of Fort Scott, Kans., was established on May 30, 1842, to protect the frontier against Indians. Fort Scott was named after Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott and served as an intermediate post on the military road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Gibson. It was abandoned on April 22, 1853, in accordance with Orders No. 9, Headquarters Department of the West, dated March 30, 1853.

The post was formally reestablished on January 16, 1863, by War Department General Orders No. 14 of the same date; however, troops had been stationed there as early as June 1858. After serving as a military supply depot, it was abandoned for a second time in October 1865, in compliance with written instructions to Capt. Nathaniel Vose, post commander, from Headquarters District of Kansas, October 17, 1865.

With troops already serving there in September 1869, Fort Scott was reestablished again in January 1870 as an independent post named "South Eastern Kansas," pursuant to a communication from Headquarters Department of the Missouri, January 14, 1870, to Maj. James P. Roy, "Comdg Troops in South Eastern Kansas." The post's new mission was to provide military protection to the Missouri River, Fort Scott, and Gulf Rail Road against hostile white settlers of the area. The units making up the command although headquartered at Fort Scott, were mostly strung out in camps along the route of the railroad at such places as Columbus, Limestone, and Drywood Creek, Kans. The post was abandoned for the third and final time on April 16, 1873, in compliance with Special Orders No. 49, Headquarters Department of the Missouri, April 6, 1873, which transferred the garrison to Fort Gibson, Indian Territory.

After the final abandonment of Fort Scott, its records for the period 1869-73 were sent to the Adjutant General's Office (AGO) in Washington, D.C. Clerks in that office numbered the bound records. The number assigned to each volume by the AGO

appears in brackets in the table of contents of this publication. These numbers are useful as a more precise method of identifying the volumes. All of the records reproduced in this publication were created during the period 1869-73.

Series Listing and Remarks

Letters Sent

The two volumes of letters sent cover the period from September 30, 1869, to April 16, 1873. The letters copied in these volumes were dispatched mainly by the commanding officer and the post adjutant of Fort Scott; a few were sent by the acting assistant quartermaster and the post treasurer, the post adjutant in his capacity as "Mustering Officer" and "Act[in]g. Sig[nal] Officer," and the recorder of a post council of administration.

The letters are arranged in generally chronological order. Letters dated 1869, most of those for 1870, and few for 1871, are numbered in sequence for each year; the letters for 1872-73 are unnumbered. Notes in the volume margins, adjacent to the texts of a few letters, show officers or titles of offices to whom copies of the letters were sent in addition to the addressees. National Archives and Records Service (NARS) staff members have prepared and filmed on roll 1 of this publication a typewritten name and title index to the two volumes of letters sent. A number usually follows a name or title in this index; the number refers to either the letter book page or the letter sent number. If neither the letter nor the page on which it is copied bears a number, the date of the communication is given after the name or title of the addressee.

Register of Letters Received

Registering letters received was a 19th-century recordkeeping practice. In the single Fort Scott register of letters received reproduced in this publication, dated September 22, 1869-February 20, 1871, an entry for a letter may include the name, rank, military organization, staff office, or other affiliation of the writer; the date the letter was written; the place where it was written; the name or title of the addressee; a summary ("purport") of its contents; the date received at Fort Scott; and the manner of its disposition (whether filed or forwarded). Page and/or document numbers and years of related letters sent, endorsements sent, or special orders issued, are also sometimes given, using the abbreviations "LB" for letters sent, "E.B." for endorsements sent, and "S.O." for special orders.

The entries in the volume are arranged in generally chronological order by the dates letters were received. Thereunder, the entries are numbered consecutively from 1 to 61 for 1869, from 1 to 211 and from 112 to 212 for 1870 through December 8 (the repetition of numbers is the result of a clerical error), and are unnumbered for the remainder of December 1870 and for all of 1871. Not all the letters entered in the register are now among the headquarters records of Fort Scott. Some entries are annotated to show that the letters were forwarded to other officers or offices, including Fort Scott officers and department headquarters. Large asterisks in the register's left-hand page margins alongside certain entries indicate communications that have been identified as still present in the series of letters received.

Letters Received

The letters received at Fort Scott consist of a single, series of unbound communications, November 27, 1869-April 14, 1873. About half of the letters received for 1870 are registered in the register of letters received described earlier; the remaining communications for 1870 and those for 1869 and 1871-73 are unregistered. The principal addressees are the adjutant and the commander of the troops headquartered at the fort; a few letters are addressed to the acting assistant quartermaster and other post staff officers.

The largest category of letters in this series are those received from company, troop, and detachment commanders and other regular officers reporting to Fort Scott headquarters from the various camps of the dispersed command. Letters were also received from the post's acting assistant quartermaster, the several acting assistant surgeons stationed with the forces in the field, Department of the Missouri headquarters and staff offices, other Army officers, railroad officials and other civilians, and enlisted men. Additional incoming communications include original (mailed) copies of telegrams received from department headquarters, copies and an extract of a few special orders issued at other posts, officers' reports of disability, a few letters sent by the commanding officer and post adjutant at Fort Scott to department headquarters and other addressees and returned by endorsement, and copies of correspondence between department headquarters and third parties furnished the commander of Fort Scott for his information.

Subjects include requests of officers for leaves of absence, the detail and relief of enlisted men in the quartermaster's department, examination of recruits by medical officers, instruction of soldiers in military signals, and troop movements. Specific events discussed in the letters include removal of white settlers from a Miami Indian reservation and the "riotous conduct" of certain troops of the command at Chetopa, Kans., in October 1870.

The communications received at Fort Scott during the period 1869-73 are arranged chronologically by year and thereunder roughly in chronological order by the dates of the individual documents. There is no correspondence for the periods April 24-July 5, 1870; January 4-May 28, 1871; and December 29-March 31, 1872. A few smaller gaps in the series also exist. For 1870, registered letters bearing file citations, such as "L.R.P. 20 §§ 9 S.E.K. 70" (i.e., letters received register p. 20, letter No. 9, South Eastern Kansas, 1870), are interspersed with unregistered letters. Most of the communications in this series are endorsed with the date received at Fort Scott. Enclosures, such as weekly and monthly company returns, descriptive lists of enlisted men, and charges and specifications, are seldom present.

Endorsements Sent

According to another recordkeeping practice of the day, there was kept at Fort Scott a series of volumes known as endorsement books. Frequently, instead of writing a separate letter, the commanding officer, or post adjutant wrote a reply or forwarding statement on an incoming communication and either returned it to the sender or forwarded it to another office or person involved in the matter. These replies or endorsements were copied into books, usually with summary descriptions of the incoming communications. Each description may contain such information as the type of communication received; the date it was written or prepared; the date it was received; the name, rank or title, and/or organization of the writer; and the subject matter of the communication. Sometimes the texts of existing endorsements written on incoming communications were also copied in the endorsement books. Sometimes there are abbreviated references to the letters received or to the number of an earlier, related Fort Scott endorsement (such as "See E. B." plus page and endorsement number in the endorsement book). A few entries in endorsement book volume 2 [5] are memorandums giving the names of enlisted men granted furloughs.

The Fort Scott endorsements copied into the two volumes reproduced in this publication are dated September [23], 1869-

April 14, 1873. The volumes are arranged in generally chronological order by the dates of the endorsement; the endorsements are numbered consecutively in yearly sequences.

General Orders

Among the issuances of Fort Scott is a volume containing fair copies of general orders, September 9, 1869-March 3, 1873. General orders were issued to the entire command to announce instructions and to disseminate information of general concern, such as the assumption and relinquishment of command of the post by various officers; inspection and muster of the troops of the command; the appointment and relief of regular officers to serve as post adjutant, post treasurer, acting commissary of subsistence, and acting assistant quartermaster; the holding of drills; the proceedings of garrison courts-martial; the convening of post councils of administration; and reports to be made by officers. There are often marginal notations on the pages of the volume adjacent to specific orders, which identify by name or title the post, departmental, or other officer or officers to whom copies of the orders were furnished. The orders are arranged chronologically by year and thereunder numerically. A few unnumbered post circulars, similar to general orders in nature, are interspersed among the general orders.

Special Orders

Another kind of Fort Scott issuance reproduced in this publication is the special order, fair copies of which are contained in two volumes, dated September 9, 1869-April 16, 1873. Special orders conveyed instructions to individuals or small groups of individuals rather than to the entire command. Among other things, Fort Scott special orders assigned and relieved enlisted men to and from such special assignments as escorts, couriers, headquarters orderlies, and service in the various staff departments as teamsters, laborers, and hospital stewards; assigned officers as temporary commanders of companies or detachments of troops; provided for the stationing and movement of companies and other units of the command at or to various places; attached recruits and officers to particular companies or cavalry troops and medical officers to various camps and units; commanded the pursuit of deserters; convened boards of survey, councils of administration, and garrison courts-martial; granted leaves of absence to officers; transferred enlisted men to other posts; temporarily sent officers and enlisted men to other posts to attend court-martial proceedings as witnesses or to conduct prisoners for trial or confinement; and directed various actions to be taken

by Fort Scott staff officers, including the purchase and issue to the troops of supplies, the furnishing of transportation and quarters to individual soldiers and groups of soldiers and the payment of enlisted men on "extra duty" in the quartermaster's department. There are usually marginal notations on the pages of the volumes adjacent to specific orders, which identify by name or title the officers and enlisted men to whom copies or extracts of the orders were issued or furnished. The special orders are arranged by year and thereunder numerically. On pages 17 and 22 of volume 1 [6] appear circulars numbered "1" and "2" respectively.

Related Records and Publications

Other records of Fort Scott for the period 1869-73 in RG 393 include a volume containing fair copies of letters received by the post acting assistant quartermaster dated October 4, 1869-August 20, 1870. In Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917, RG 94, are monthly post returns of Fort Scott filed as returns for the post of "South Eastern Kansas," December 1869-March 1873. The returns are reproduced on roll 1206 of NABS Microfilm Publication M617, Returns From U. S. Military Posts, 1880-1916.

RG 393 contains headquarters records of Fort Scott during the Civil War, June 1862-October 1865. These include letters and telegrams sent, endorsements sent, registers of letters received, letters and telegrams received, and special orders.

Other records in the custody of NARS pertaining to Fort Scott include the Military Reservation Division's reservation file in RG 94 containing notes on the establishment, location, and garrisoning of the post from 1842 to 1871 based on cited official records and published works. A closely related series called the "Outline Index of Military Forts and Stations" contains similar information on Fort Scott and has been reproduced on roll 7 of NABS Microfilm Publication M661, Historical Information Relating to Military Posts and Other Installations ca. 1700-1900. The Quartermaster General's consolidated correspondence file in Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, contains letters, purchase proposals, abstracts of bids, statements of funds expended, plans, reports, lists and other records pertaining to the construction of buildings, employment of military and civilian personnel, purchase and sale of supplies and buildings, use of surplus lumber by freedmen and refugees, and other activities at Fort Scott from 1842 to 1869.

For a detailed and well-documented published account of the pre- and post-establishment history of Fort Scott, from 1830 to 1853, see Louise Barry, "The Fort Leavenworth-Fort Gibson Military Road and the Founding of Fort Scott," in Kansas Historical Quarterly, 11:115-129 (May 1942).

This introduction was written by Howard H. Wehmann. Leroy Graham and Howard H. Wehmann compiled the index to the volumes of letters sent and Robert B. Matchette prepared the records for microfilming. Annis K. Olsen edited the introduction.

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