FORM 10-300
UNITED
T.S.
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(TYPE ALL ENTRIES – COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS)

1. NAME

COMMON:

Fort Reno

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Sec. 54, T 13 N, R 8 W — 3 1/2 m, W, 2 m, N of

CITY OR TOWN:

El Reno

STATE:

Oklahoma

CODE:

35

COUNTY:

Canadian

CODE:

017

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

(CHECK ONE)

District

Building

Site

Structure

Object

OWNERSHIP

Public

Private

Both

Public Acquisition:

In Process

Being Considered

STATUS

Occupied

Unoccupied

Preservation work in progress

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC

Yes:

Restricted

Unrestricted

No

PRESENT USE (CHECK ONE OR MORE AS Appropriate)

X Agricultural

Government

Park

Transportation

Comments

Commercial

Industrial

Private Residence

Other (Specify)

Educational

Military

Religious

In an agricultural experiment station

Entertainment

Museum

Scientific

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

The Federal Government

STREET AND NUMBER:

Bureau of Land Management

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington

STATE:

D. C.

CODE:

08

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk

STREET AND NUMBER:

Canadian County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN:

El Reno

STATE:

Oklahoma

CODE:

35

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

General Land Office Survey

DATE OF SURVEY:

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Office of the County Clerk

STREET AND NUMBER:

Canadian County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN:

El Reno

STATE:

Oklahoma

CODE:

35
Fort Reno, to borrow from Gilbert and Sullivan, comes close to being the model of a frontier military post. To be true, the last army personnel departed in 1949. But the complex of facilities still clusters around a trim parade. There are mellowed brick buildings that date from the 1880s, along with more modern structures of varying size, style and construction. There are pleasant, tree-shaded roads and walkways, comfortably aging, living quarters, sunny barns and sheds used by U. S. D. A. in its experiment station operation, and an old rock-walled military cemetery.

The immediate complex of buildings covers some 40 acres and is well maintained; the grounds are carefully tended. A landscaped road leads into the retired post a mile and a half from U. S. 66 and I. S. 40. Most impressive of the old buildings, and perhaps the one most deserving of preservation, is the two-story brick commissary, built in 1884. At the west end of the parade, it has been altered somewhat over the years, but its massive, almost castle-like exterior lines remain. Several smaller red brick structures of approximately the same vintage also remain. As emphasis to date has, happily, been more on preservation than on renovation or modernization, the first impression of the casual visitor is likely to be one of having stumbled onto a frontier outpost that has grown up graciously with the times and only recently been retired from active military duty.

Note: Though no longer at the fort itself, one of Fort Reno's oldest surviving buildings deserves mention. Among the original 1875 structures — probably erected to house work details clearing and developing the site — it was constructed of post oak pickets with clapboard or crude "shake" roof. These little huts were used as kitchens after the plank buildings were occupied. Some years back the last of them was "restored"—its adobe chinking replaced by concrete, its roof covered with good shingles. In 1957, it was moved to Adams Park in nearby El Reno. There is no historic justification for labeling it GENERAL SHERIDAN'S HEADQUARTERS 1874, but the cabin has at least been preserved as a physical tie with the fort's earliest days.
Fort Reno was established — on the south bank of the North Canadian River in what is almost the center of present-day Oklahoma — on July 17, 1874. Construction of facilities began in 1875. It remained a military post until 1949 (though after 1906 it served as one of the army's two principal remount depots). Since 1949, the U. S. Department of Agriculture has operated the facility as an experiment station.

Although unrest among the Indians in this area, principally the Cheyennes, prompted its creation, the fort itself never experienced any serious "Indian trouble." Instead, with Darlington, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency across the river to the north, it served primarily as a stabilizing influence on the troubled frontier. Together the two institutions played an important role in preserving the peace and in directing the orderly transition of this part of Indian Territory from reservation to individual farms and ranches. Fort Reno provided the troops that supervised the first great Run of 1889 opening Old Oklahoma to settlement.

Most dramatic single event in which the post played a role was the heroic dash to freedom of nearly 500 Northern Cheyennes in 1873. They were among over 900 Cheyennes rounded up the previous year, following the Ouster Massacre in Montana, and forcibly resettled here among their southern tribesmen. Bitter in defeat, unhappy with the climate and the shortage of food, they broke for "home" in September, 1878. Brilliantly led by Dull Knife and Little Wolf, they managed to elude much of the U. S. Army on their 1,200-mile trek. (Though eventually recaptured, they were allowed to remain in the north.)

As an interesting side bar, Fort Reno claims the distinction of having western Oklahoma's first telephone line ... a crude communication link with nearby Darlington Agency. Unimportant? Who knows? Perhaps this frontier "hot line" — keeping the fort's commanding officer and the Indian agent at Darlington in touch with each other — played its role in maintaining peace and tranquility along with the rifle and the beef ration.
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Lackey, Vinson, The Forts of Oklahoma, (Tulsa, 1963), 38-40
Morrison, William Brown, Military Posts and Camps in Oklahoma, (Oklahoma City, Harlow, 1956), pp. 146-156
Peery, Ian W., "The Indians Friend John H. Seger," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Volume X, pp. 569-591
Ruth, Kent, Great Day in the West, (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1963), pp. 204-205

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

<table>
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<th>CORNER</th>
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<th>LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY</th>
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Approximate acreage of nominated property: 10 acres

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries:

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<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name and Title: Kent Ruth
Organization: Oklahoma Historical Society
Street and Number: Historical Building
City or Town: Oklahoma City

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

- National [X] State [ ] Local [ ]

Name: [Signature]
Title: Liaison Officer for Arkansas
Date: 30 January 1970

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: JUN 22, 1970

ATTEST:

[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date: JUN 3, 1970
OKLAHOMA: Canadian County

Fort Reno in July 1877

Structures now standing in red.

1. Commander's Quarters
2. Officers' Quarters
3. Adjutant's Office
4. Guard House
5. Quartermaster Store House
6. Commissary Store House
7. Cavalry Barracks
8. Infantry Barracks
9. Company Kitchens
10. Hospital
11. Post Bakery
12. Corral
13. Forage House
14. Wagon Yard
15. Commissary Sgt's Quarters
16. Post Trader's Store
17. Officers' Mess House
18. Sink
19. Laundress' Quarters
20. Blacksmith Shop
21. Hay and Wood Yard

From: Medical History, July, 1877.
(not to scale)
OKLAHOMA: Canadian

Fort Reno c. 1890

Buildings now standing in red.
(Some in altered condition.)