



The National Archives at
Chicago

June 2015

From Fort Abercrombie to Fort Zarah: Select Microfilm and Digital Records on 19th Century U.S. Army Posts.

Most 19th century operational records regarding Army units stationed in the United States are held at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC. However, researchers interested in learning more about the various forts and the soldiers stationed at them can find useful information without traveling too far. Many records concerning installation, or posts, were microfilmed in the 20th century and distributed across the nation as microfilm publications. This article highlights two of them: microfilm publication M661: *Historical Information Relating To Military Posts And Other Installations Ca. 1700-1900* and microfilm publication M617 *Returns from U.S. Military Posts, 1800-1916*.

M661 is an eight microfilm roll publication reproducing the 27-volume “Outline Index of Military Forts and Stations,” and contains historical information about military posts and other installations, and related historical information, for the period ca. 1700-1900. The volumes also contain a few 16th-, 17th-, and 20th- century references. The volumes are a part of the Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917, Record Group 94. This microfilm publication has not yet been digitized but is available at the National Archives at Chicago and many other locations.

Consistent with the practice followed during the period of colonial rule in North America, the United States established the policy of setting aside tracts of land from the public domain for military purposes. The volumes reproduced in this microfilm publication were created and maintained in the Adjutant General's Office in carrying out its responsibility for the supervision of these tracts, many of which achieved the special legal status "reservations."

[Page 1: Select Microfilm and Digitized Records on 19th Century U.S. Army Posts.](#)

[Page 7: Summer Interns at the National Archives at Chicago](#)

[Page 8: President Obama and First Lady Choose Chicago as Site for Presidential Center](#)

[Page 8: Flag Day](#)

[Page 9: Happy Father's Day](#)

The National Archives at Chicago is located at:

7358 S. Pulaski Road
Chicago, IL 60629-5898
773-948-9001
chicago.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Chicago research rooms are open to the public Monday through Friday, and the second Saturday of every month, from 8:00 AM to 4:15 PM.



Snelling Fort

Minnesota

See Fort St. Anthony.

Lat. 44° 52'
Long. 93° 12' to
Alt. 820 ft
94 ft. above river.

Variation of Needle
East. 9° 53'.

Established in 1821 as Fort St. Anthony,
changed to Fort Snelling, Jan. 17,
1825. In angle formed by the
confluence of St. Peter & Mississippi
rivers, 6 miles below city
of St. Paul.

Lat. 44° 52' 46"; Long. 93° 4' 54".
Land resd. May 25, 1853; modified
Nov. 16, 1853; reduced Jan'y 5, 1874.

A.G.O. 1874; A.G.O. 1877; & sub.
Begun in Sept., 1820; it is located
at the junction of the St. Peters
with the Mississippi. It stands
on a high bluff nearly 300 feet
above the water. The walls of
the fort and most of the build-
ings are of stone.

Hills & Minn., pp. 24, 32, 33, 410.
At the junction of the Miss.
& Minn. rivers. Resu made by
L. S. & Wm. July 13, 1839. Modif.

Part of the Adjutant General's Office history of Fort Snelling, Minnesota – found in microfilm publication M661.

The responsibilities of the Adjutant General's Office in regard to these military tracts included the handling of correspondence relating to the acquisition of legal title to the sites; procurement of plans and estimates for the repair and construction of buildings; consideration of applications for various kinds of privileges connected with the sites, such as the granting of rights-of-way and ferry crossings; compilation of historical sketches of both existing and abandoned posts; and the handling of correspondence and the preparation of executive orders creating and disposing of military reservations after Congress gave these powers to the President in 1834 (23 Stat. 103).

In matters relating to the declaration of a reservation and similar business involving public lands, close liaison was required between the Adjutant General's Office and the General Land Office of the Department of the Interior. Before the Secretary of War prepared papers for the President's consideration, the General Land Office had to certify that there was no objection to the declaration of the

reservation and it was, therefore, a proper subject for military acquisition. When military authorities concluded that a reservation or other tract was no longer needed for military purposes, control over the land was returned to the Secretary of the Interior, and it reverted to the public domain.

The Adjutant General's Office entered in these volumes information concerning installations in which the United States might have even the slightest interest. Consequently, in addition to permanent and temporary U.S. Army posts both within and beyond the continental limits of the United States there are entries for Confederate forts, fortified Indian towns, harbor pilot stations, national cemeteries, redoubts and batteries, and civilian and fur company blockhouses, as well as entries for British, French, Spanish, and Dutch installations erected within the present boundaries of the United States.

The volumes contain a number of entries on military subjects in addition to the entries for military installations. For example, volume "X," which contains no entries for installations, includes bibliographic entries for all wars fought on American soil to 1860, giving lists of published works on Indian wars from the Pequod War to the Third Seminole War, and on foreign wars from the French and Indian War to the Mexican War. This same volume has a heading "Indian Trading Houses" under which is given the name, location, and date each trading house was established; and a list of acts and public documents relating to the trading houses during the period 1795-1826.

A list of Indian Trading Houses found in Volume "X" of microfilm publication M661

202	Indian Trading Houses.
Coleroine	On the river C. Etary s. I. established 1795 removed in 1797 to Wilkinsons Ct. Osage - discontinued in 1806.
Tellico Block-house	in the Southwestern Terr. established 1795 removed to the Hiwassee of the Tennessee in 1807 discontinued.
Fr St Stephens	on the Mobile. Miss. established 1802.
Chickasaw block	on the Mississippi. established 1802.
Fr Wayne	on the Miami of the Lakes. Ind. Terr. established 1802.
Detroit	in the Michigan Terr. established 1802 discontinued in 1805.
Arkansas	on the river Arkansas. Ark. Terr. established 1805.
Hatchetches	on the Red River in Okla. Territory established 1805.
Belle Fontaine	at the Mouth of the Missouri. La. Terr. established 1805 discontinued in 1808.
Chicago	on Lake Michigan Ind. Terr. established 1805.
Sandusky	on Lake Erie. Ohio. established 1806.
Michilimackinac	on the island of the Lake Huron established 1808.
Fort Osage	on the Missouri. La. Terr. established 1808.

Post Report from Fort Sheridan, July 1894, the month it was ordered to send soldiers to the Pullman Strike on the south side of Chicago. From microfilm publication M617

Of course, many researchers want to know more about the soldiers who were stationed at the army forts and camps across the nation. One of the many resources for this type of information is microfilm publication M617, *Returns from U.S. Military Posts 1800-1916*. This publication, comprising 1550 rolls of microfilm has been digitized by the [National Archives digitization partners](#) and is accessible at all National Archives facilities as well as to libraries and individuals with subscriptions.

The commanding officer of every post, as well as commanders of all other bodies of troops such as department, division, brigade, regiment, or detachment, was required by Army Regulations to submit a return (a type of personnel report) to The Adjutant General at specified intervals, usually monthly, on forms provided by that office. Several additions and modifications were made in the form over the years, but basically it was designed to show the units that were stationed at a particular post and their strength, the names and duties of the officers, the number of officers present and absent, a listing of official communications received, and a record of events.

RECORD OF EVENTS.

Whenever the garrison is reinforced, (by recruits as well as soldiers), reduced, or relieved, or a post is established, evacuated, or re-occupied, the commanding officer will immediately report the fact to the Adjutant General, and to the General and Department Headquarters, accompanied by an exact return of the augmenting or withdrawing force, and note the same on the first subsequent Post Return. Such report and record, in the case of a new post, must indicate its position, which should be identified with some known object—as 25 miles west from — river or town, — post office —, and, in all cases, the best means of communicating with the new post by mail and telegraph must be stated.

In case of the evacuation of a post, a copy of the Special Return will also be left among its records.

Actions in which any portion of the garrison has been engaged; scenes, marches, destruction of property by fire, &c., and everything of interest relating to the discipline, efficiency, or service of the troops, will be minutely and carefully noted, with date, place, distance marched, &c. The post commander will, therefore, exact the very fullest information in these particulars.

The names and rank of officers and soldiers killed, missing, or wounded in action, with date and place, will be accurately given.

The number of horses, either public or private, lost in service, together with the date, place, and circumstances connected with said loss, and the name of the officer responsible for, or owning, the property will be reported.

Personnel to telegraphic instructions from the War Dept., the regular year, consisting of the 15th Regiment of Infantry, Troops A & B, 7th Cav. Lt. Batty Co. 1st Art., left post about 8:45 P.M. July 3rd, with 10 days field "2 days travel radius" proceeded by rail to Chicago, Ills., for the purpose of quelling riots, arriving at same from about 11 P.M. same date. On arrival, Troops B & C, 7th Cav. Lt. Batty Co. 1st Art., remained on board the cars - Cos. B & D, 15 Inf., Capt. W. J. Hunter & S. J. Chapin, were sent to the Union Stock Yards - Cos. A & C, 15 Inf., under command of Major G. M. Bradley, 15 Inf., to Blue Island, Ills., Cos. E. & F, 15 Inf., Capt. H. H. Comptons - G. H. McComas, to Grand Crossing, Ills.

On the morning of July 4th, Troops B & C, 7th Cav., Capt. Wm. H. Lt. Batty Co. 1st Art., Capt. D. R. Dugay, Capt. D. R. Dugay, under command of Lieutenant Colonel Donisthorpe, 15 Inf., were sent to the Union Stock Yards - The instructions given were to assist U.S. Marshals etc.

On morning of July 5, Cos. C. & E, 15 Inf., were ordered to 40th Street - where Lt. Capt. Co. C. 15 Inf., was ordered into the Blue Island Depot, where they performed guard duty the following day, on the morning of the 6th this Cos. were placed in camp at the Government Building, Ills.

Detail from the July 1894 Fort Sheridan July Post Return, found in microfilm publication M617, showing the units dispatched following the order by President Cleveland to send federal troops into Chicago.

Most of the records reproduced in this microfilm publication are monthly post returns. Included with them are some morning reports, field returns, rosters of officers, and related papers, which were added to the collection by the Adjutant General's Office either as supplementary information or as substitutes for missing post returns. Field returns, for example, generally show the movement of troops or detachments to and from the post or station or give information concerning detachments in the field from units at the post. Among the related papers are some cards that contain information pertaining to wars and skirmishes with the Indians. Also included are papers containing historical information about the post, lists of officers and commanders of the post, and data relating to the establishment and the abandonment of the post. The related papers have been filmed at the beginning of the returns for the post which they pertain. A few duplicate and corrected copies of returns are included. Corrected copies of specific returns are generally filed after the original return.

Detail showing the officers and soldiers present for each unit stationed at Fort Sheridan in July 1894.

In general, the returns for a specific post cover the period of the official existence of that post. Frequently there are gaps in dates, indicating periods when the post was un-garrisoned. For some posts, however, returns are missing for periods when the post was garrisoned.

Researchers interested in learning more about these microfilm publications, or other records held by the National Archives at Chicago, should feel free to contact us at chicago.archives@nara.gov.

Summer Interns at the National Archives at Chicago



The National Archives at Chicago welcomes three interns who have volunteered to spend part of their summer working at NARA.

- Brendan Hegman (left) is returning for his second internship with the National Archives, having previously spent a brief class assignment with us indexing Bankruptcy Act of 1841 records from the US District Court at Indianapolis. Brendan is presently enrolled in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Dominican University
- Michelle Decker (center) is enrolled in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Dominican University. She is a graduate of Indiana University and is an avid runner, having completed a full marathon and four half marathons.
- Tara Cajacob (right) recently relocated from Minnesota is entering into her senior year of undergraduate studies in history at the University of Illinois Springfield. In addition to this internship, she also works as a museum assistant at the Elk Grove History Museum in Elk Grove Village.

President Obama and First Lady Choose Chicago as Site for Presidential Center

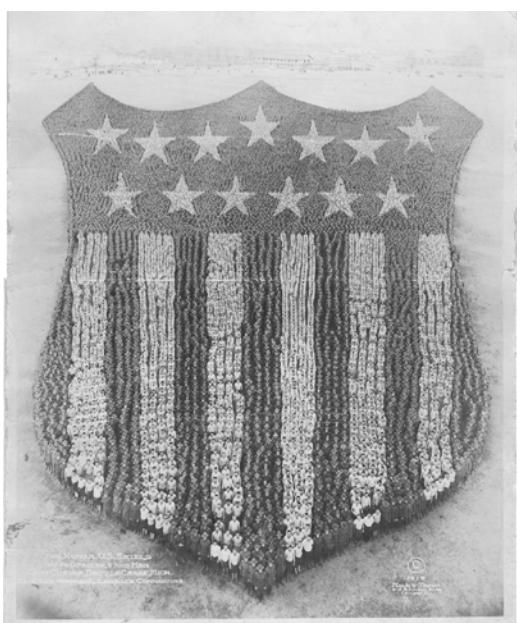


Figure 1 Washington and Jackson Parks on Chicago's South Side have been pegged as two potential sites for the future Obama Presidential Center

On May 12, 2015 President Obama and the First Lady announced that Chicago's South Side was chosen as the future home of the Obama Presidential Center. The library will be constructed using private money and then transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) for administration. The new library will be located about ten miles east of the National Archives at Chicago. Please see the Obama Foundation website for further information:

<http://www.barackobamafoundation.org/>.

June 14, 2015 is Flag Day!



Above: 1918 U.S. shield photograph at Camp Custer, Michigan. Record Group 92, Records of the Quartermaster General. National Archives at Chicago.

Below: 10,000 sailors, including David Ferriero, the future Archivist of the United States and head of our agency, form a living flag during the Great Lakes Training Center graduation ceremonies on July 8, 1967 at Soldiers Field in Chicago. Mayor Richard J. Daley and Rear Admiral William Guest, Commandant of the Ninth Naval District spoke at the event. This photograph can be found at the National Archives in College Park



Happy Father's Day



Father and daughter at Peterson Bridge Campground, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Michigan, August 1959.

National Archives Identifier 2131240. Historic Photographs, ca. 1880 - ca. 1970 Record Group 95: Records of the Forest Service, 1870 - 2008

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