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Article Summary: The 1887 expansion of Fort Robinson was the most significant chapter of its history. The removal of Indians to reservations and the arrival of the railroad spurred development of the physical layout of the fort. Buildings dating from the expansion are still in use.

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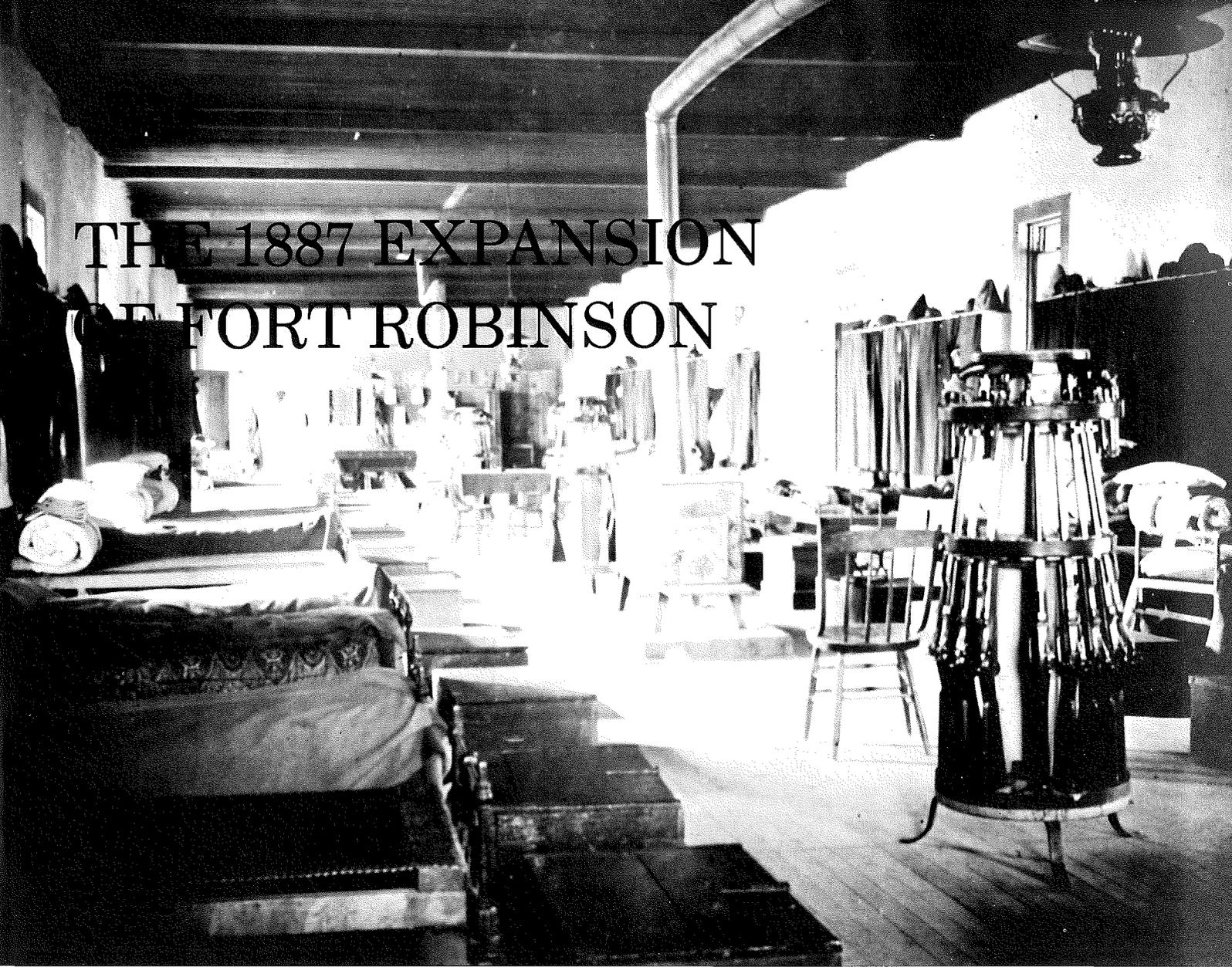
Names: Red Cloud, Crazy Horse, Charles F Manderson, James Brisbin, George Crook, George B Dandy, Henry H Wright, Edward Hatch, Charles Taylor

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Photographs / Images: interior of one of the 1887 cavalry barracks about 1890, Fort Robinson shortly after the 1887 expansion, Colonel Edward Hatch, Nebraska Representative Archibald J Weaver, Nebraska Senator Charles F Manderson, map showing buildings constructed in 1887 for the new "west end" at Fort Robinson and for the "east end" (old post) area, General George Crook, drawing depicting one side of an 1887 officers' duplex unit, single unit of noncommissioned officers quarters constructed c. 1887 (1905 photo), cavalry stable constructed in 1887 (1905 photo)

THE 1887 EXPANSION OF FORT ROBINSON



Interior of one of the 1887 cavalry barracks about 1890.

By Thomas R. Buecker

The 1880s brought a new period of consolidation to the army on the plains. With the removal and restriction of the plains Indians to reservations, the army redeployed its forces. Larger, more modern posts, such as Fort Logan in Denver, were

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planned and constructed, while existing posts like Fort Riley, Kansas, and Fort Snelling, Minnesota, were greatly expanded. Isolated posts, such as Fort McPherson, Nebraska, and Fort Fetterman, Wyoming, began to be abandoned. The primary reasons for this consolidation and troop redistribution were the concentration of plains tribes on reservations and the rapidly expanding network of railroads, which expedited troop and supply movements. Among the posts abandoned

during the latter part of the nineteenth century was the famous Fort Laramie. Among those slated for expansion and further service was Fort Robinson.

Fort Robinson began in March 1874 with the establishment of Camp Robinson at the Red Cloud Agency. Located on the White River in northwestern Nebraska, the agency was home for some 13,000 Oglala Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Indians. Soldiers sent from Fort Laramie established the camp to pro-



Fort Robinson (from the east) shortly after the 1887 expansion was completed. The six buildings on the upper right are adobe officers quarters.

tect the agency and its employees. In May they moved the camp one and one-half miles west of the agency to a permanent site at the confluence of Soldier Creek and White River. At this site a post area to house a garrison of five companies was built in 1874-75.¹

During the turbulent years of the middle 1870s, soldiers from Camp Robinson played an important role in keeping the peace in the northern panhandle region. Soldiers provided escorts, scouted, and pursued depredating bands of Indians. After the Custer defeat, the post was a key factor in the neutralizing of Red Cloud's Oglala, holding many non-treaty Indians in check. In the winter of 1876-77 it was an important base of military operations, culminating with the surrender of large numbers of Indians who had refused to come to the agencies. In the early years of the Black Hills gold rush the post was an important point on the Sidney-Deadwood Trail. Troops from Camp Robinson provided escorts and patrolled the road. The post was also the scene of two dramatic events of the Indian Wars: the death of Crazy Horse in September of 1877 and

the tragic Cheyenne Outbreak of January 1879.

In October 1877 the Indians at the Red Cloud Agency were moved to a new agency site on the Sioux reservation in Dakota Territory. With this removal, the original mission of Camp Robinson ended. And after 1880 the Sidney-Deadwood Trail traffic diminished, reducing the need for trail protection. Garrisons at the post were reduced to one or two companies; the useful period of the post seemed over.

However, after 1878 Camp Robinson took on a new importance as the second closest military post to the new Pine Ridge Agency. It became one of a chain of posts that surrounded the Sioux reservation. They included Fort Niobrara in Nebraska, and Forts Randall, Hale, Sully, Bennett, and Meade in Dakota Territory. As a further sign of its usefulness, the post's designation was changed from "Camp" to "Fort" in 1878, indicating its permanent status.²

In the early 1880s Fort Robinson retained the same appearance as when established in 1874. On the north side

of a 160-yard-square parade ground were six duplex adobe officers' quarters and a single residence for the post commander. On the east and west sides were two long, log barracks, each housing two companies. Completing the south side were a log cavalry barracks, adjutant's office, guard house and commissary, and quartermaster storehouses. Behind these were stables, shops, other storehouses, and the corral for quartermaster animals. The post could house officers and enlisted men for five companies in somewhat crowded conditions.

Hastily constructed, the log buildings were hardly considered permanent. Built by troop labor with available log, stone, and adobe, the buildings soon began to require considerable maintenance. Post commander Major L.W. Carpenter commented in April 1884, "Very extensive repairs are now necessary to place the barracks in proper condition, and the old and decaying walls do not seem to be worth the labor and expense which will have to be expended upon them." In addition the officers' quarters were very crowded. Originally intended as

Fort Robinson

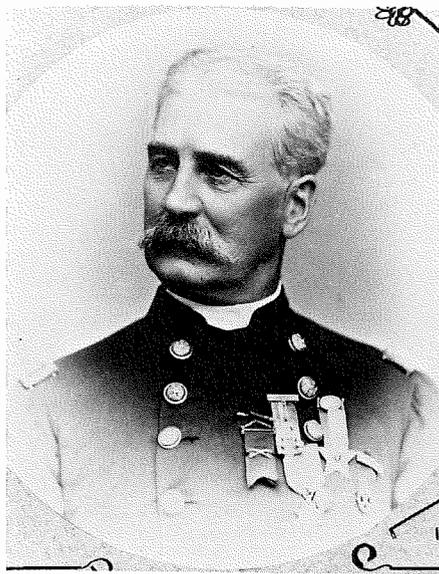
single dwellings, the houses were quickly converted to duplex units, each unit having two large rooms with small, crude kitchen additions built to the rear. Summing up the state of affairs of post facilities, Major Carpenter also wrote, "If the post is to be retained, it will certainly be economy and good policy to expend a sufficient sum at Fort Robinson to place it in good condition, instead of patching up old and worthless log buildings, which have now lasted as long as could be expected."³

With the abandonment of Camp Sheridan in 1881, Fort Laramie became the next closest military post to the Pine Ridge Agency after Fort Robinson. For many years Fort Laramie occupied the most important location regarding military operations in the upper plains.⁴ Strategically situated at the gateway to the Powder River country, it was undoubtedly the key military post in the West during the main years of the Indian Wars. But with the removal of the Indians to reservations, the importance of its location decreased. During the 1880s it became apparent to the military that Fort Laramie's value as a troop station was declining. In addition its buildings required major repair or replacement.

Probably the single most important factor to the success of the western army was the railroad. The steady expansion of railroad routes in the post-Civil War period allowed rapid movement of men and supplies. General of the Army Phil Sheridan was a strong advocate of western railroad expansion. He felt railroads brought not only settlement to new regions, but great change to the western army. With posts located along rail routes troops could easily be sent into troubled areas.⁵

By 1883 the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad had extended its tracks to Fort Niobrara in north-central Nebraska. The builders had envisioned a route from Fremont to the Black Hills, but before this could

be accomplished, the Elkhorn line was purchased by the Chicago and North Western. The North Western proceeded with the plan to build into the Dakota Territory and to extend a line to the west, via the White River Valley. This new route would put Fort Robinson directly on a railroad line and make the post the logical guardian of the reservation to the north.



Colonel Edward Hatch. Courtesy of U.S. Army Military History Institute.

In his annual report for 1884, Department of the Platte Commander Colonel John Gibbon urged a larger garrison for both Forts Niobrara and Robinson. The primary basis for his recommendation was the fort's location relative to the Sioux reservation: "Forts Robinson and Niobrara are well located as picket posts for the close observation of the most powerful and warlike tribe of Indians on the continent . . . wise policy would therefore seem to indicate these two posts should be enlarged."⁶ By 1885 the route for the new railroad was surveyed past Fort Robinson and into Wyoming. With expansion proposed for Fort Robinson, the question of Fort

Laramie's abandonment resurfaced. That year the post commander there wrote, "It seems to me probable that the new line of railroad ascending the Niobrara reopens the question as to the need of retaining this as a permanent post."⁷

Sparked by rumors of railroad expansion, advertisements promoted the availability of grazing and agricultural lands in the White River Valley for homesteads. In the spring of 1885 settlers began to stream into the region, drawn by the promise of railroad service and available land. Close proximity to the Sioux reservation would be offset by the protection of the Fort Robinson garrison.

By 1885 the decision had been made to expand Fort Robinson. A larger post would have many benefits — increased economy of supply, discipline of troops, greater proficiency in drill, and improved comfort of officers and enlisted men. In addition, columns of troops for field service could be speedily organized. In his 1884 report, Major General John A. Schofield, Division of the Missouri commanding officer, stated the stations to be occupied should be permanent (rather than temporary) posts with comfortable barracks and quarters. This included Fort Robinson.⁸

The Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad reached Fort Robinson during 1886. If the arrival of the railroad indicated continued use for that post, it also meant the end for Fort Laramie. Schofield noted,

Even if another railroad should hereafter be extended along the valley of the North Platte to and beyond Fort Laramie, Fort Robinson would still remain much the most important station because of its closer proximity to the Sioux Reservation. Hence I suggest the construction of additional barracks and quarters at Robinson and a corresponding reduction of garrison at Fort Laramie.⁹

Plans for an expanded Fort Robinson began late in 1885. The War Department proposed to station ten companies, five of cavalry and five of infantry, there. In February 1886 construction estimates from Department of the Platte headquarters were for-

warded to the adjutant general's office. They recommended building seven new barracks, three officers' quarters, two storehouses, and one stable, at a cost of \$70,000. An additional appropriation of \$12,000 was requested to make "necessary repairs to post." It was evident a larger parade ground would be required for more troops. But before construction could begin, funding had to be secured from Congress.

It was only natural that a proposed military construction project would attract the interest of Nebraska politicians. In March 1886 a Nebraska delegation consisting of Senator Charles F. Manderson, and Representatives Archibald J. Weaver and G. W. Dorsey called on Secretary of War William E. Endicott.¹⁰ The purpose of the meeting was to urge the enlargement of Fort Robinson. Manderson, a member of the Committee on Military Affairs, had taken great interest in the project after hearing rumors of the post's abandonment late in 1885. A bill for building additional quarters costing \$52,000 was then pending. After the meeting, Dorsey stated, "This is a very important measure for the people of the state."¹¹

Meanwhile the local press reacted to the news from Washington. After learning of the project and realizing its importance to the region, the neighboring *Chadron Journal* stressed the potential danger in case of an Indian outbreak: "The handful of troops now at Robinson would be of little avail . . . If troops are necessary at all they are necessary within reach of the Sioux and Fort Robinson is one of the places they should be quartered." However, not all newspaper editors were in favor of expansion at the post. The *Sidney Telegraph*, most interested in improvement of Fort Sidney, was hardly sympathetic. "The *Journal* would have us believe the Sioux at Pine Ridge are a very hard set of Indians liable to break out at any moment and that large numbers of troops are necessary in that neighbor-

hood." Such protests were ignored as the Fort Robinson project moved forward.¹²

In May 1886 the Senate Committee on Military Affairs released its report to accompany Bill S. 1935. This bill was to enlarge, repair, and complete military quarters and barracks at Fort D.A. Russell, near Cheyenne, and Forts Niobrara and Robinson in Nebraska. The bill proposed an appropriation of \$200,000 to complete this



Nebraska Representative Archibald J. Weaver

work. Senator Manderson, a member of the committee, was a staunch supporter of the bill, and the report recommended its passage in language calculated to raise the specter of Indian attacks on defenseless settlements:

The primary object of stationing troops at Fort Robinson and at Fort Niobrara is to hold in check 28,000 savage Sioux on the Sioux Reservation in Dakota, on the confines of Northern Nebraska. This tribe of hostiles is armed with the deadly Winchester rifle, and its warlike disposition has repeatedly left desolation and massacre in the track and trouble therefrom may be again apprehended in spite of the civilizing influences at work to temper its ferocity.¹³

The report also pointed out that there was an influx of population near the threshold of the Sioux reservation, "relying upon government protection . . . liable at any moment to experience all the horrors of Indian warfare." The committee's report added that the existing buildings at Fort Robinson were temporary in nature and almost uninhabitable. It went on to stress the importance of consolidation and the potential threat of "these Indians, many of them were in the Custer massacre, and are among the worst of their species, and have had a taste of white man's blood . . . Give Robinson a garrison of sufficient size to cow down the savages by certain and immediate punishment."¹⁴

Congress soon provided funds for additional quarters at Fort Robinson. Part of the funding had been secured in August of 1886. A sundry civil bill passed by Congress granted \$225,000 for construction and enlargement at posts as determined by the Secretary of War. Of this amount \$20,000 was earmarked for Fort Robinson. The main funding bill was passed on January 29, 1887, and appropriated \$55,000 "to complete barracks and quarters at Fort Robinson for ten companies." The Secretary of War combined both amounts for a total of \$75,000 to be expended for improvements in 1887.¹⁵ A decision then had to be made regarding how many buildings, barracks and officers' quarters, should be built . . .

Lt. Col. James Brisbin, commanding officer at Fort Robinson, felt the log barracks could be repaired and remodeled to adequately house five of the ten proposed companies. The bulk of the appropriation was to be expended on new quarters for the other companies. Brisbin also suggested the new post headquarters building be converted into a field grade officers' quarters.¹⁶

In December Brig. Gen. George Crook, department commander, and Maj. George B. Dandy, chief quartermaster for the department, made the

first of several visits to Fort Robinson. This visit affected the future design of the post. At least five additional sets of officers' quarters would be required for the larger garrison. Building style and construction material to be used for the officers' quarters had to be determined. Recent construction at Fort Russell utilized two-story brick quarters, which became a standard quartermaster department building design about 1885. Brisbin checked with a brickyard in Chadron for a price quote on brick, but this type of building was not used.

After Dandy's December visit, Brisbin was ordered to prepare final plans and specifications. He detailed 2d Lt. Phillip Bettens, Troop K, Ninth Cavalry, on special duty to work on this project along with post quartermaster Lt. Henry H. Wright, also of K Troop. In February Brisbin and Wright made a trip to department headquarters in Omaha to confer on the projected work. As was done at Fort Niobrara, it was decided to build the new quarters of adobe.¹⁷

Adobe construction was certainly not unusual in Nebraska. The army extensively used adobe at numerous western posts, including ones in Nebraska and as far north as Montana. Economy was the main reason for the use of adobe, and it was readily available. Adobe also allowed the army to stretch the building appropriation. The new plans to be used were better than those used at Niobrara. The officers' quarters were nearly identical; the only difference was that the Robinson quarters were five feet longer. The barracks were basically of the same design, but the main portions of the buildings were about fifty feet longer than those at Fort Niobrara.

General Crook and Major Dandy returned to the post on March 18, 1887. On this visit it was decided to locate the new post just northwest of the existing installation.¹⁸ Fort Robinson's original post area was large enough for five companies, but inadequate for the enlarged garrison. The broad plain



Nebraska Senator Charles F. Manderson

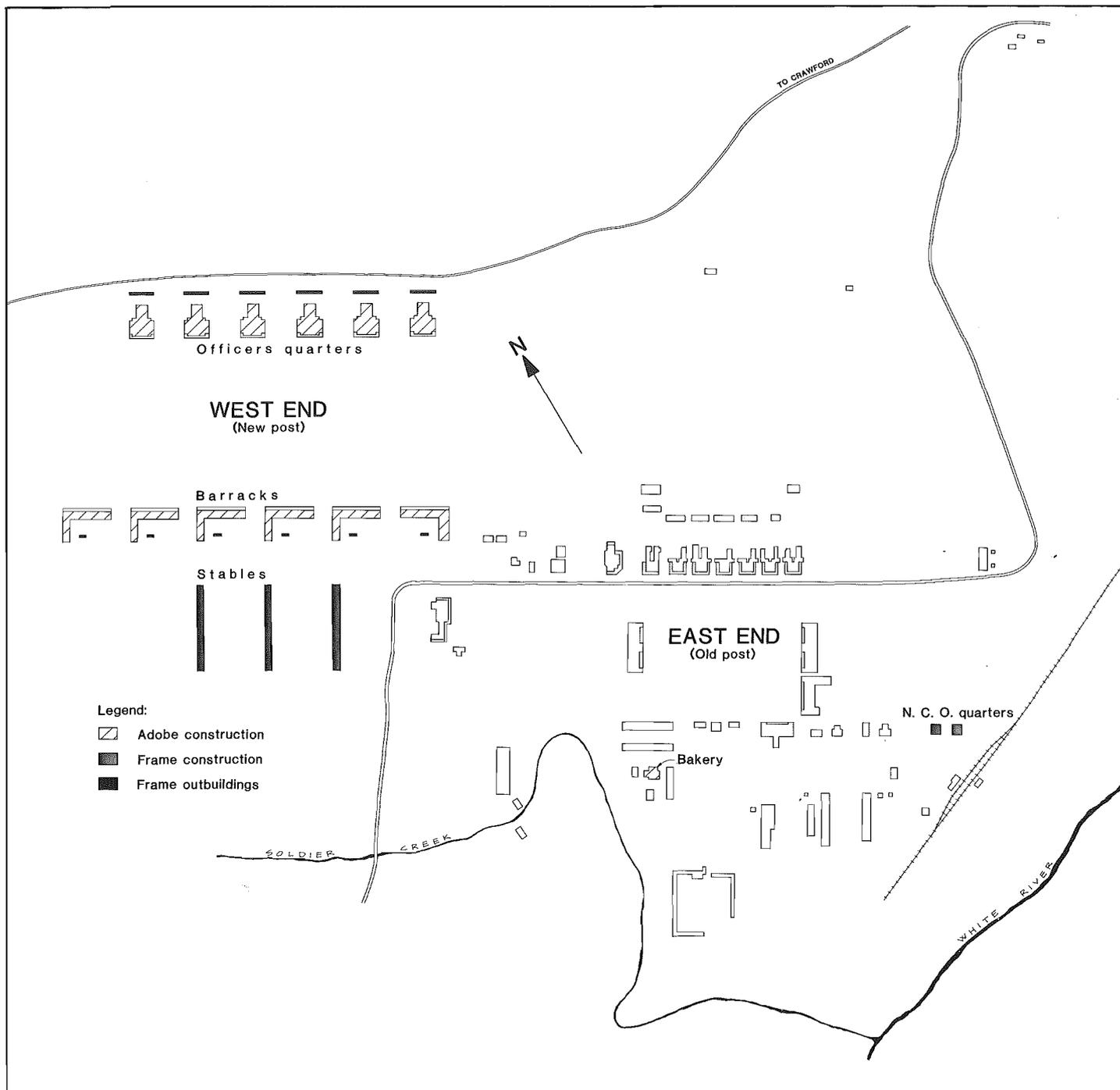
above and west of the old post afforded an excellent site for the new buildings. An officers' row was laid out on the north side of the new parade grounds. On the south side would be the barracks and behind them an area for stables. The new layout would be retained through the remainder of the post's military use.

In the spring of 1887 Fort Robinson's garrison consisted of thirteen officers and 250 enlisted men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Brisbin. The units stationed there were Companies C and I, 8th Infantry, and Troops C, F, and K of the Ninth Cavalry. Brisbin realized additional troops would soon be arriving to bring the post up to ten company size. To eliminate household disruptions, he requested newly arriving units be put up in tents until the new quarters were completed. In May 1887 the headquarters staff and band of the Ninth Cavalry were transferred from Fort McKinney, Wyoming, making Fort Robinson a regimental headquarters post. On the eleventh Col. Edward Hatch arrived and replaced Brisbin as

post commander. Besides acting as commanding officer of the regiment, Hatch also had to oversee the post enlargement project. He soon became a moving force in this endeavor. Lt. Charles Taylor, Ninth Cavalry regimental quartermaster, arrived several days later to replace Lieutenant Wright as the quartermaster officer in immediate charge of expansion operations.¹⁹

Actual preparations for construction began in late spring. The previous February Brisbin had prepared and submitted final estimates for materials and other contingencies. Beginning in May raw materials for construction work were procured and stockpiled at the post. A steam sawmill was sent over from Fort Niobrara and set up on the wood reserve five miles west of Fort Robinson. Stone was located, quarried, and hauled in for building foundations. Limestone was burnt in temporary kilns for lime to be mixed with sand for mortar. Hundreds of thousands of adobe bricks had to be manufactured. From locations about four miles away, clay was plowed and scraped to be hauled to ten adobe mills for forming brick. All of this conformed to a basic rule followed by the frontier army in post construction: use available materials.

The labor needed to procure building materials also resulted from standard military procedure. Soldiers from the garrison were detailed as laborers to cut trees, manufacture adobes, and process other building materials. It was common for soldiers to be used as laborers. Enlisted men could be paid about twenty cents a day extra by the quartermaster department, non-commissioned officers excluded. Hatch was concerned about the large number of men required to perform this work plus regular garrison duties and normal training activities. The construction project would require "many and large details to accomplish such portion of the work that the appropriation may be used economically."²⁰ He recommended that the



Six duplex officers quarters, six barracks, and three cavalry stables were constructed in 1887 to form the "west end" at Fort Robinson. Two noncommissioned officers quarters and a bakery were added to the complex of buildings in the old post area.

Fort Robinson

reinforcing units soon to arrive be ordered to assist in the construction of the quarters they were to occupy. Later he asked that prisoners held in the post guard house, sentenced to hard labor at the Leavenworth prison, be retained to augment the labor force at the post. Hatch also requested that other prisoners held at hard labor be sent to Fort Robinson to work.²¹

Logistical problems developed and continually plagued the construction project. From the onset shipment of building materials from Omaha was delayed. Hatch noticed the problem shortly after taking command. On May 23 he urgently requested that articles needed for the renovation of the existing quarters be hurried on, adding, "The necessity is so great they should be forwarded at once."²² Besides supply problems, there was a serious lack of transportation available at Fort Robinson to haul lumber and to prepare and haul adobe brick, stone, sand, and lime. When construction began, there were only four six-mule teams at the post, three of them under orders to accompany a detail to Cheyenne. Hatch realized it would reduce costs if the government provided draft animals and wagons to move materials rather than contracting for this service.²³ He was aware of the fine line between available funding and the number of buildings projected to be built. Meanwhile the work proceeded.

On May 23 Colonel Hatch asked permission to advertise in the newspapers for bid proposals. The next week he telegraphed Omaha headquarters requesting bid proposal forms. By the middle of June bidders had gathered at the post, anxious to submit proposals for the work, but the forms still had not been received. With potential contractors waiting, Hatch was understandably irritated by the delay.

At about the same time concern arose over availability of timber. It was planned to use wood from the post reserve for the project, but the supply

was questionable. To eliminate a possible shortage, Hatch wrote department headquarters, suggesting the addition of eight sections of available land to the reserve. The land was well-timbered and was closer to the post. This recommendation, like many that Hatch would submit, was not implemented, and the post reserve continued to supply wood for construction.²⁴



General George Crook

On June 15 ground was broken at the new post site for the building foundations. On June 20 all bids were submitted to Department Quartermaster Dandy and the successful ones accepted. Most of the contractors for the masonry and carpentry work came from the Chadron area: Banning and McFarland, Rothwell Brothers, and Benjamin Cooley, who soon proceeded with their work. Much of the foundation and adobe work was to be done by mason Tom Madden, also from Chadron.²⁵

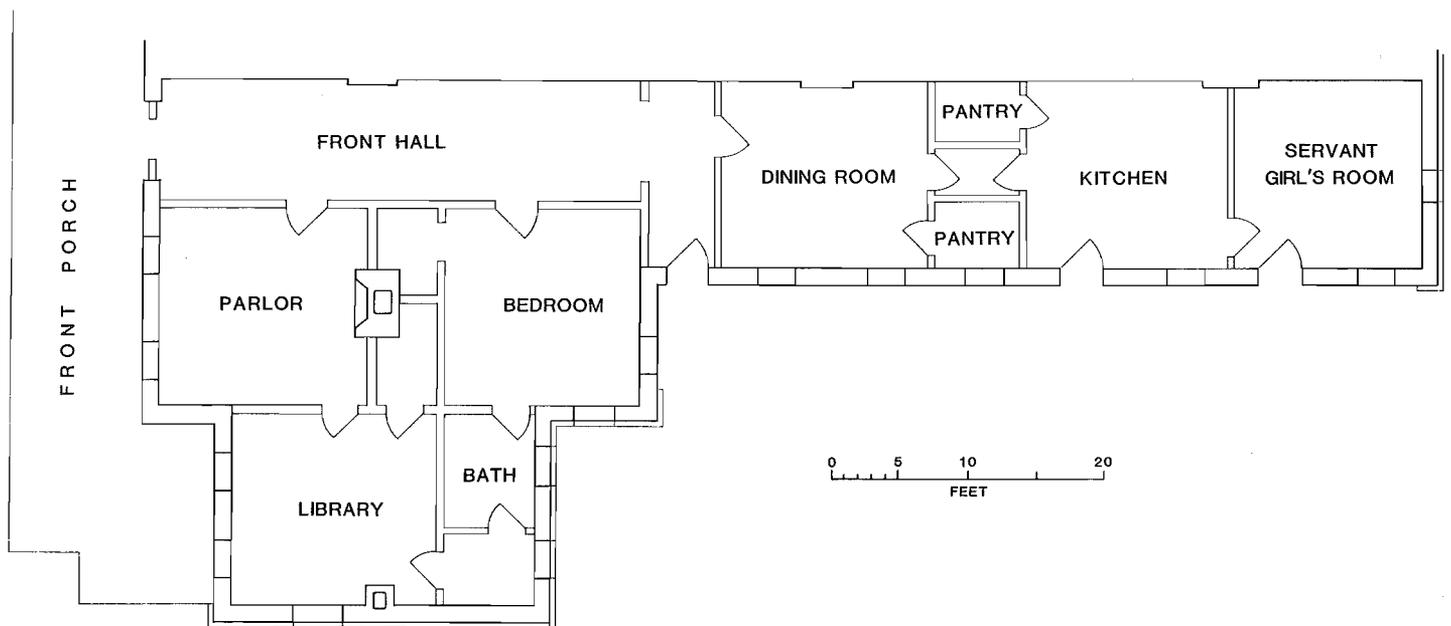
The sawmill sent from Fort Niobrara proved to be the weak point in furnishing the new post with lumber. Post officers described it as worthless and urged its replacement. A new port-

able sawmill was requested, to be obtained through emergency purchase, so that it would not be charged against the appropriation. However, the old mill continued to be used after replacement parts and new shafting were delivered.

The lack of adequate transportation remained a potential problem as summer began and construction started in earnest. A concerned Hatch asked that teams used to transport troops to Fort Duchesne, Utah, the previous fall be transferred back at once. He wrote a lengthy letter to the department adjutant general, hoping to enlighten headquarters on the shortage of transportation. He noted that former Post Quartermaster Wright had been assured by Dandy that enough teams and wagons would be provided for moving materials. At the time there was barely enough transportation at the post for garrison use. Hatch itemized the number of teams and wagons he thought necessary for various tasks in connection with the construction and computed that 254 additional mules were needed. But he then backed down substantially and stated, "There is a bare possibility of completing the work by the addition of 48 mules."²⁶ At the same time, requisitions were forwarded for six new army wagons and twenty additional front wheels for timber and stone wagons.

To help remedy the situation, Dandy transferred teams from Fort Duchesne and Fort Bridger, Wyoming. Apparently the animals received were inferior to those Hatch expected, as he immediately called a board of survey to report on the condition of the mules. The board condemned the Fort Bridger quartermaster of culpable neglect in not sending "complete and serviceable" teams. A report of the board's findings was forwarded to department headquarters.²⁷

As the summer progressed, hardware supplies from Omaha were late and caused construction delays.²⁸ Besides barracks, quarters, and



Drawing adapted from floor plan of 1887 adobe officers quarters. It depicts one side of a duplex unit.

stables, Hatch and Lieutenant Taylor planned to build a new bakery to replace the 1875 structure. By the middle of July they had not received word from Dandy to proceed with its construction. Hatch was impatient with the chief quartermaster's delay and ordered adobes manufactured for the building, trusting that other incidental bills incurred during its construction would be honored. Another source of irritation to Hatch was the fact that Major Dandy wanted all disbursements for payment made solely through his office, rather than releasing funds to the post quartermaster. Hatch felt this method of payment delayed the work; not allowing the post quartermaster or commander to disburse funds was "absolutely a declaration that neither can be trusted." On July 25 he wrote a vigorous letter of protest to the adjutant general in Omaha:

If the post Quartermaster is not to be trusted with the disbursements he should not be with the construction . . . knowing how important it [new construction] is to this command suffering for

want of quarters by men and officers it is respectfully suggested that an officer of the General Staff in whom the Chief Quartermaster can have confidence be submitted and intrusted with the disbursement and the construction relieving the present Quartermaster and Commanding Officer of all responsibility and supervision.²⁹

Hatch thought the post quartermaster should at least be able to pay out sums from one to five hundred dollars. Submitted requisitions for payment were being delayed, causing complaints from individual suppliers for non-payment.

Just before construction began on the officers' quarters, Hatch attempted to change both their design and the material from which they would be built. Hatch wanted no part of the single-story, adobe duplex plan. Instead he favored the two-story type quarters similar to those built at Fort Russell. In a letter to department headquarters, he argued that it was really more economical to use brick instead of adobe. Breakage and loss by rains would be much higher with adobe (about thirty percent), and the contractors could lay up a wall faster and

easier with brick than with adobe. He stressed that adobe was not well adapted to the northern climate, and builders in Chadron and Crawford were using brick for fine buildings. Hatch also thought if the soil was suitable for adobe it would be fine for brick. This was just another Hatch recommendation that was received and ignored by department headquarters that summer.³⁰

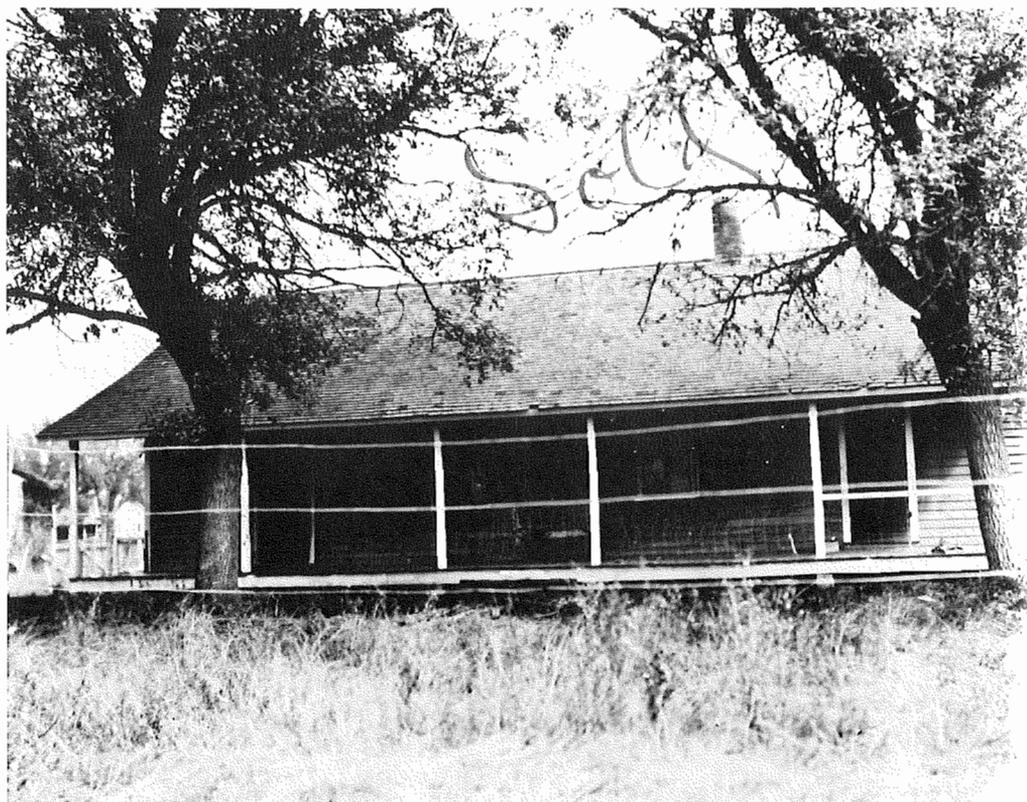
By August construction work at Fort Robinson was in full swing. On August 11 General Crook made a quick inspection visit. Work was well underway on five duplex officers' quarters. Each unit contained a parlor, library, main bedroom, and bathroom in the main part, with dining room, kitchen and maid's room in the rear wing. Each half had about 1,750 square feet of living space, or about twice that of the earlier 1874-75 quarters. Long porches on the front and back sides were added to protect the adobe from the elements; shortly after completion wood siding was installed on the exposed ends for further protection.

Fort Robinson

On the south side of the parade ground five barracks buildings were taking shape. Each was built to house a company of men with a main living area 30 by 169 feet and a kitchen and dining room wing 30 by 70 feet. Like the officers' quarters the barracks were constructed of adobe brick. Behind the barracks three frame troop stables were built. Each stable was 30 by 201 feet in size and was divided into thirty-three double stalls. Each had a capacity of sixty-six animals and contained a saddle room and granary.³¹

The weather occasionally slowed the work and soldiers detailed for extra duty on the project sometimes caused problems. On August 24 Private Henry Royster of Troop F, Ninth Cavalry, was charged with driving a six-mule team while intoxicated. For this transgression, a garrison court found him guilty and fined him \$10.00. In another case Private Thomas Powell of Company I, Eighth Infantry was charged with desertion of his post. Powell, assigned to watch over the sawmill, was discovered absent from his post for seventeen hours, subjecting the property in his charge to destruction by fire or loss by theft. For this offense, he was fined \$10.50.³²

More new quarters were required if the fort was to house ten companies. In September it was decided to add barracks for one more cavalry troop and an additional set of officers' quarters. Considerable repair work was done on the old barracks. Earlier that summer two companies of the Eighth Infantry arrived from Fort Bridger, and a troop of the Ninth Cavalry was transferred from Fort Niobrara. The new units were housed in tents until adequate barracks housing was completed. The arrival of additional soldiers brought a corresponding increase to the officer staff. By August twenty-three officers were at the fort, half of them awaiting completion of houses on the officers' row. The garrison strength of ten companies was never achieved during Fort Robinson's remaining years as a troop station; no



Single unit of noncommissioned officers quarters, constructed ca. 1887 and photographed in 1905. Building Inventory and Specification Books for Fort Robinson, Nebraska, Record Group 501, Nebraska State Historical Society Archives.

more than eight company garrisons would ever be stationed there.³³

On September 18 two of the new barracks were finished and occupied by Companies D and K of the Eighth Infantry. In October three more of the barracks were occupied and most of the officers' quarters completed with the "remainder of those projected being rapidly pushed forward."³⁴ The following month, all the new buildings were finished. On November 2 Senator Manderson arrived as a guest of Colonel Hatch to inspect the newly completed post. Though dwarfed by modern military construction, the expenditures in 1887 were impressive. Each barracks cost \$6,017.65; the officers' quarters \$6,150.80; and the stables \$1,086.95. Enough was squeezed out of the \$75,000 appropriation to also construct the bakery and

two small houses for non-commissioned staff officers. Outhouses for all quarters, fencing and boardwalks for the officers' houses, and an ice house completed Hatch's project.³⁵ When it was all totaled, there was a slight cost overrun of \$1,271.57. This was made up from another sundry civil bill that had been passed March 3, 1887. The new construction at Fort Robinson accounted for twenty percent of the Department of the Platte quartermaster expenditures for 1887-88. What must have been a trying summer and fall for Colonel Hatch was over.³⁶

With the enlargement of Fort Robinson, Fort Laramie's days were numbered. On August 31, 1889, General Order No. 69 announced its abandonment. In March 1890 the last garrison marched out and headed for

Fort Logan, one of the new consolidation posts. The next month Lieutenant Taylor and fourteen men of the Ninth Cavalry came over to handle the auction of the abandoned fort. The first soldiers at Fort Robinson came from Fort Laramie; ironically the last soldiers at Fort Laramie came from Fort Robinson.

The “new” post of Fort Robinson soon proved its worth. During the Pine Ridge fighting of 1890 the first troops sent to the troubled agency came from Fort Robinson. Later in the 1890s the railroad added a new dimension to the post’s role as a troop station. Units from Robinson were sent by rail to Montana for strike duty during the great railroad strike of 1894 and to the Idaho mining strike in 1899. The post took on an international aspect as troop units from Fort Robinson were sent into the Spanish-American War, and later duty in the Philippines. The days of the frontier army were over.

Further expansion came to Fort

Robinson in 1889, 1891, and 1895, adding two barracks, six sets of officers’ quarters, five stables, and other shops and warehouses. By 1895 the entire garrison was located on the new parade ground, now referred to as the “west end.” The original post buildings on the “east end” were used for storage and married soldiers’ quarters. Finally in 1899-1900, the remaining log structures of the first fort were demolished.³⁷

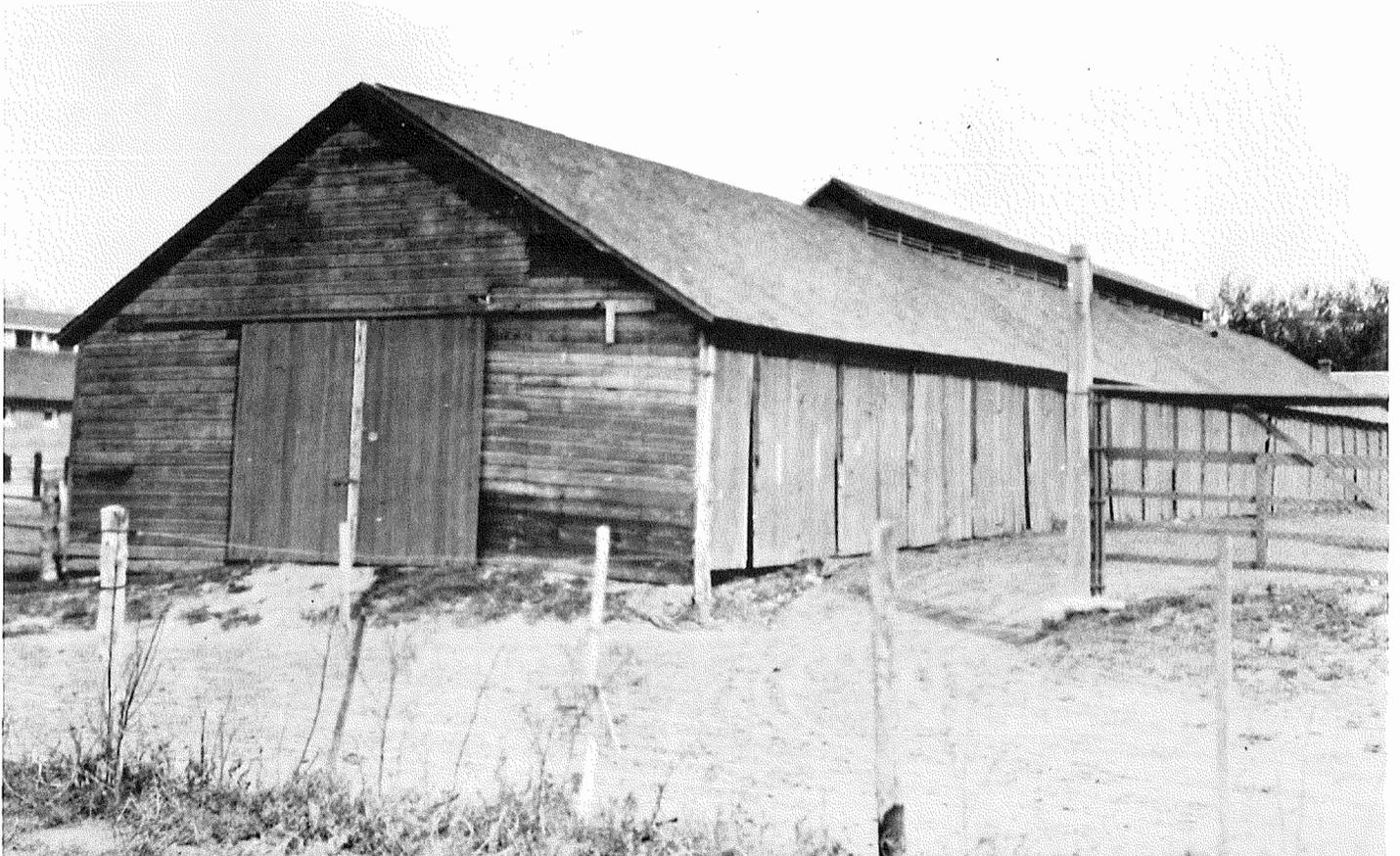
In the early 1900s Fort Robinson was still considered a key installation. In 1906 projected expansion proposed brick construction, for which Hatch had pleaded twenty years earlier. An elaborate building plan that year called for replacing all of the 1887 adobe buildings with modern brick structures. In 1908-9 construction started — but the massive brick rebuilding project was never completed as planned.³⁸

In 1919 Fort Robinson became a quartermaster remount depot, con-

ditioning and processing horses for the mounted services, and was no longer used as a regular troop station. During the remount years the troop component at the post was much smaller than it had been with regular cavalry garrisons. The remount detachment was housed in one of two double company brick barracks built in 1909. Because they were in poor condition and no longer used, the five remaining 1887 barracks were demolished in 1923. Construction of new brick stables in 1908 removed several of the earlier frame stables. One of the original 1887 stables remained in use by the remount service until it was demolished in the 1930s.

However, the 1887 officers’ quarters saw much additional service. During the remount period there were fewer officers at Fort Robinson. The adobe officers’ quarters were then mainly used as N.C.O. housing, except for a brief period when a battalion of field artillery was stationed at the post be-

Cavalry stable, constructed in 1887 and photographed in 1905. Building Inventory and Specification Books for Fort Robinson, Nebraska, Record Group 501, Nebraska State Historical Society Archives.



Fort Robinson

tween 1928 and 1931.³⁹ World War II brought more officers to the post and for the last time the row was fully utilized by the military. After the army closed the post in 1948, the facility was turned over to the United States Department of Agriculture as a beef research station. The 1887 officers' quarters, like most of the post buildings, faced an uncertain future. Today the row and other remaining post buildings are preserved as part of Fort Robinson State Park. The first unit on the line was restored by the Nebraska State Historical Society as it would have appeared in the 1890s. The other five houses are used as park visitor accommodations.

The 1887 expansion of Fort Robinson was undoubtedly the most significant chapter of its history. A physical layout of the post was developed that was maintained for the rest of its military years. Building types from the expansion survive and are still in use today. The expansion was made possible by the arrival of the railroad, which also guaranteed Fort Robinson's continued military importance. Fort Robinson became one of the survivor posts of the Indian War period and awaited new roles in the twentieth century.

NOTES

¹For more information on the founding of Fort Robinson and the Red Cloud Agency, see Roger T. Grange, Jr., *Fort Robinson, Outpost On The Plains* (April 1978; reprint, *Nebraska History*, September 1958), 39:191-240.

²General Order 79, Division of the Missouri, December 30, 1878, changed the designation. The same order changed "Sidney Barracks" to "Fort Sidney." Microfilmed copies of this and other National Archives records cited below are at the Nebraska State Historical Society.

³Letter, Maj. L.W. Carpenter to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Platte

(hereafter referred to as A.A.G. D. of P.), April 24, 1884. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), non-record material.

⁴Two well-known sources on the history of Fort Laramie: LeRoy Hafen and Francis Marion Young, *Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West 1834-1890* (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1938; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) and Remi Nadeau, *Fort Laramie and the Sioux Indians* (Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1967).

⁵Robert G. Athearn, *Union Pacific Country* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 199-212.

⁶War Department, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War 1884* (G.P.O., 1885), Part I, 116.

⁷Nadeau, 294.

⁸War Department, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War 1884* (G.P.O. 1885), Part I, 84-85, 103-104.

⁹Hafen and Young, 390.

¹⁰Senator Charles F. Manderson from Omaha served in the Senate from 1883-95 and was a member of committees on Indian and military affairs. Archibald J. Weaver was the First District Representative from Falls City from 1883-87. He died April 18, 1887. George W.E. Dorsey was Third District Representative from Fremont from 1885-91. Dorsey secured appropriations for buildings at Forts Niobrara, Omaha, and Robinson, and the Indian school at Genoa.

¹¹*Chadron Democrat*, March 18, 1886.

¹²*Sidney Telegraph*, January 30, 1886.

¹³Senate Report No. 930, May 5, 1886 (G.P.O., 1886), 1.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹⁵War Department, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War 1887* (G.P.O. 1888), Serial 2628, 430.

¹⁶Letter, Lt. Col. James Brisbin to A.A.G. D. of P., December 5, 1886; January 18, 1887. Fort Robinson Letters Sent 1884-90, NARA RG 98.

¹⁷Post Order No. 9 (January 18, 1887), Fort Robinson Orders 1884-88, NARA RG 98. For more information on the history of Fort Niobrara see Thomas R. Buecker, "Fort Niobrara, 1880-1906: Guardian of the Rosebud Sioux," *Nebraska History* 65 (Fall 1984):300-325.

¹⁸Diary of Capt. Augustus Corliss, entry for March 18, 1887. Corliss's materials are housed in the Western History Collection of the Denver Public Library. Dates regarding visits of officers and general construction activity are from the diary.

¹⁹All information regarding garrison strength, troop transfers and duties, and officer transfers and duties are from the monthly post returns from January to December 1887, Fort Robinson Post Returns, NARA RG 98.

²⁰Letter, Hatch to A.A.G. D. of P., May 26, 1887.

²¹*Ibid.*, June 19, 1887.

²²Telegram, Hatch to Chief Quartermaster D. of P., May 23, 1887.

²³Letter endorsement, May 21, 1887.

²⁴Telegram, Hatch to A.A.G. D. of P., June 17, 1887; Letter endorsement, Hatch to A.A.G. D. of P., July 11, 1887.

²⁵Telegram, Hatch to A.A.G. D. of P., June 29, 1887; *Chadron Democrat*, June 30, 1887; July 14, 1887; *Crawford Crescent*, July 14, 1887.

²⁶Letter, Hatch to A.A.G. D. of P., June 13, 1887.

²⁷*Ibid.*, July 19, August 4, 1887; Post Order No. 142, July 15, 1887.

²⁸Complications involving shipment of building supplies through the Department of the Platte Quartermaster Office were common. The previous year (1886) considerable delays were experienced in receiving supplies in the construction of buildings at the new post of Fort Duchesne, Utah. Colonel Hatch was then commanding officer of Fort Duchesne.

²⁹Letter, Hatch to A.A.G. D. of P., July 25, 1887; Telegram, July 7, 1887.

³⁰Letter, Hatch to A.A.G. D. of P., July 12, 1887.

³¹All information on buildings involved in the 1887 expansion and the later construction mentioned is compiled from materials held in the Post Building File at the Fort Robinson Museum.

³²Post Orders No. 177, September 5, 1887; Post Orders No. 188, September 23, 1887.

³³Letter, Hatch to A.A.G. D. of P., September 14, 1887; Telegram, Hatch to A.A.G. D. of P., July 11, 1887.

³⁴Monthly medical report by Capt. A.W. Taylor, Post Surgeon, September-October 1887. Fort Robinson Medical Papers, NARA RG 98.

³⁵Fort Robinson Completion Reports, October 30, November 1, 30, 1887. Fort Robinson Letters Sent, 1884-90, NARA RG 98.

³⁶Colonel Hatch continued on as post commander, until he died on April 11, 1889, from injuries received in a carriage accident the previous month.

³⁷The officers' quarters from the original post were completely remodeled in the 1890s and then used to house both commissioned and non-commissioned officers. Six of these houses remain today and are used for park accommodations.

³⁸About one-third of the parade ground buildings were either rebuilt or replaced by brick structures in 1908-9. This included four out of twenty-four projected sets of officers' quarters, two out of six double company barracks, and four out of twelve troop stables.

³⁹About six officers were stationed at the post with the remount detachment, and twenty officers were with the Fourth Field Artillery Battalion. From *A Souvenir History of Fort Robinson Nebraska* (Northwest Nebraska News, Crawford, 1930).