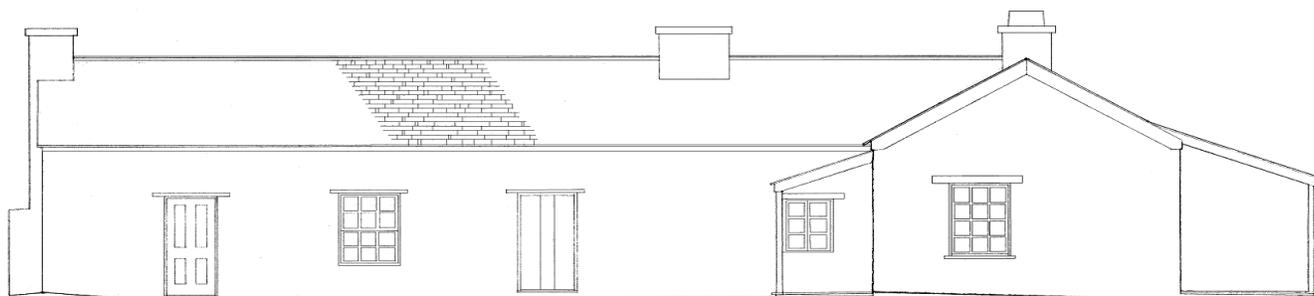


# FORT MCKAVETT

*state historic site*

## ACTIVITY GUIDE



### INTRODUCTION

Fort McKavett was established in 1852 to help protect travelers along one of the main roads connecting San Antonio and El Paso. As many as 500 men served at this fort, which also acted as a supply base for most of the military **campaigns**, planned **expeditions**, and other forts in West Texas.

Soldiers constructed many of the fort's buildings using stone from an on-site **quarry** and the pecan and oak trees growing nearby. Local springs provided a dependable source of drinking water. A soldier's life followed a strict routine of daily drills on the parade grounds, area patrols, and regular chores like hauling water, maintaining the buildings, loading and unloading supply wagons and caring for livestock. Soldiers rarely participated in actual battles or skirmishes. Meals were not very exciting and usually included coffee, beans, and pork. Soldiers would sometimes **forage** for fresh food to enrich their regular Army rations.

Officers often brought their wives and families with them to their posts. These ladies encouraged social activities, such as dances and plays, and increased the feeling of community among the fort's soldiers. The Army also employed other women as **laundresses** who would wash, iron, and mend the soldiers' clothing and uniforms.

After the Civil War, several **regiments** of African American troops, known as the **Buffalo Soldiers**, resided at Fort McKavett. Native Americans had nicknamed these regiments the "Buffalo Soldiers" because the soldiers' curly hair reminded them of the American bison, or buffalo.

Like other forts in Texas, a town sprung up near Fort McKavett to provide additional goods for the men stationed there. Some of these settlers bought the fort's buildings for their personal use after the post closed in 1883.

## VOCABULARY WORDS

Look at the words and their definitions below. They are also written in bold letters in the Introduction.

**Buffalo Soldiers**—the nickname given to the first regiments of African American soldiers formed in 1866.

**campaigns**—military operations in the field for a specific objective.

**expeditions**—a long journey for a specific purpose, like war or exploration.

**forage**—to search for food or other provisions.

**laundresses**—women who wash and iron clothing by hand for a living.

**quarry**—a large pit where stones are removed, sometimes by cutting, to be used in building.

**rations**—a fixed amount of food that soldiers are given to eat for one day.

**regiment**—a group of up to 1300 soldiers, split into 10 to 12 smaller companies, that is commanded by a Colonel.

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Use the Vocabulary Words to complete the sentences and puzzle below.

### Across

4. The army hired \_\_\_\_\_ to wash the soldiers' clothes.

### Down

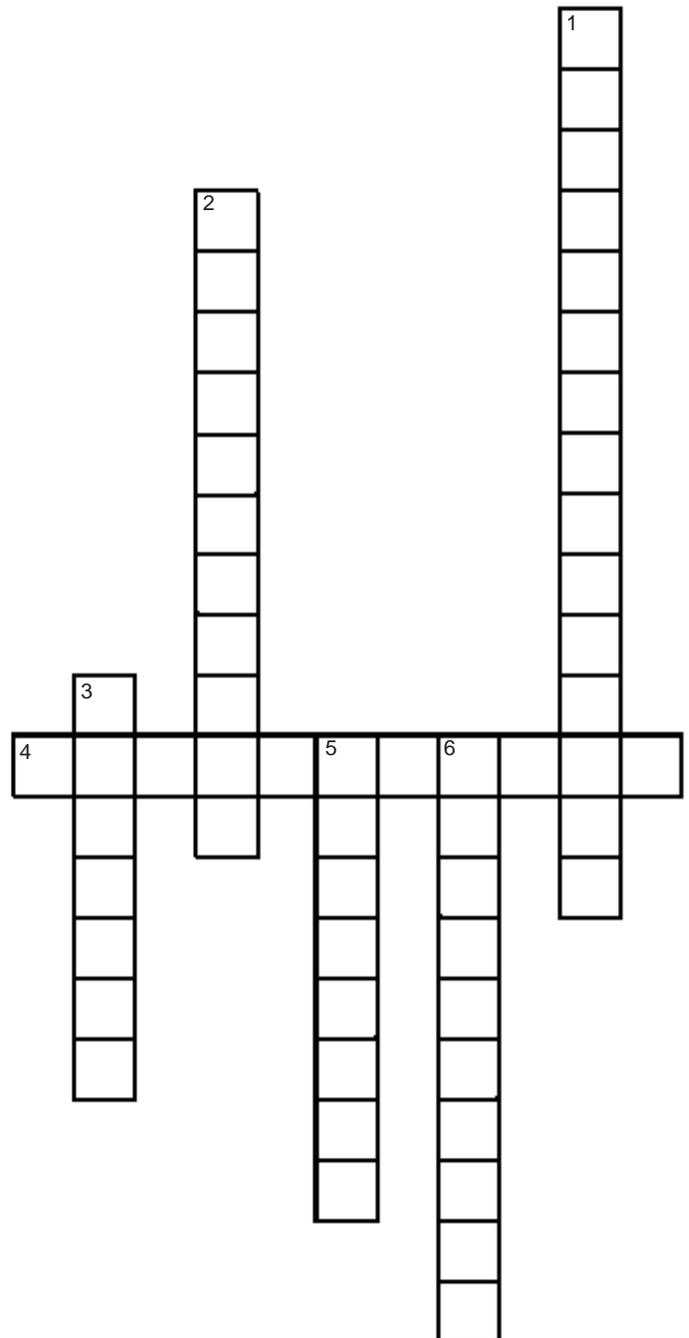
1. The first African American regiments in the army were called \_\_\_\_\_ by Native Americans.

2. The explorers and their guide prepared for their westward \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Soldiers would sometimes add to their \_\_\_\_\_ by buying or catching other food.

5. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a military unit containing up to 1300 soldiers.

6. Soldiers at Fort McKavett did not fight in actual \_\_\_\_\_ very often.



## HEROES

The Buffalo Soldiers at Fort McKavett were heroes. They fought bravely against those threatening the peace in Texas and the western United States. As the first all African American regiments established after the Civil War, they also fought against prejudice from other members of the military and the civilians they were sent to protect. They were brave, determined, and proud members of the U.S. Army.

Based on what you have learned, how would you describe them? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who are your heroes? What words would you use to describe them? \_\_\_\_\_

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## TEXAS TRAVELS

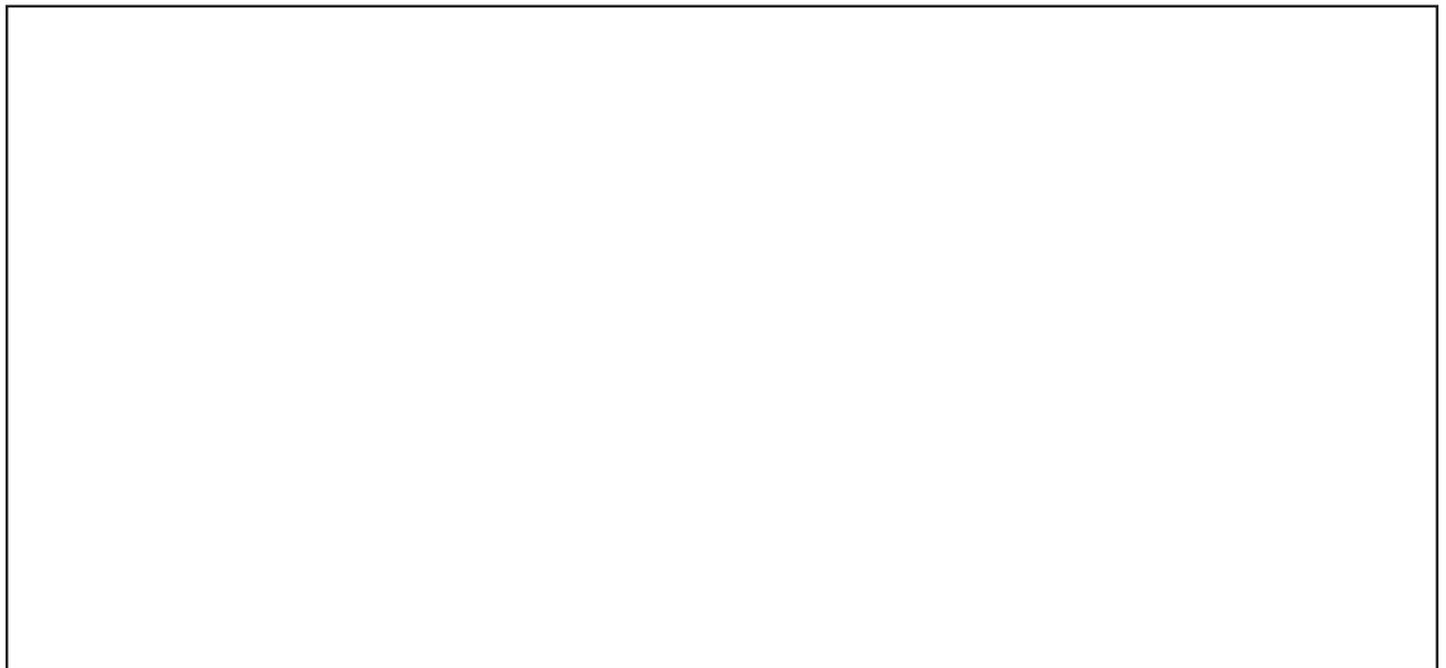
When soldiers from Fort McKavett went on patrol, they did not always know what to expect. A patrol could last for several days and the weather was unpredictable. Soldiers usually only brought a bedroll and a small knapsack with them. Each soldier was responsible for bringing his own food, protective gear, and other items.

If you were a soldier from Fort McKavett riding on a patrol, what would you bring with you? \_\_\_\_\_

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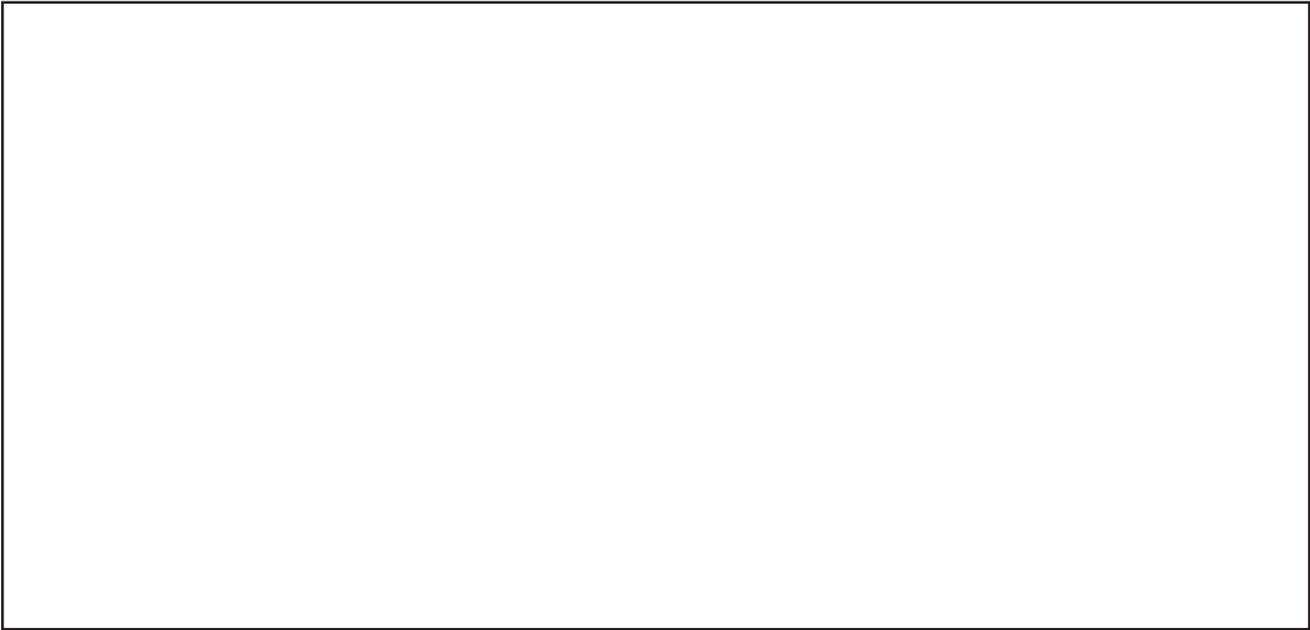
Draw pictures of the items in your knapsack below.



## SENDING A LETTER HOME

Writing was the most important form of communication for the people living at Fort McKavett. They could send long letters, short notes or postcards to share important events and news with others.

Imagine that you are sending someone a postcard about your visit to Fort McKavett. Draw a picture of something that you want to remember about the fort on the front of your postcard.



Write a short note to a friend or relative about what you have seen in the space below. Remember to address your postcard, too!

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Dear _____,</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> | <div data-bbox="1279 1220 1403 1310" style="border: 1px solid black; width: 76px; height: 43px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
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