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A Soldier's Home:

The Structures of Fort Tejon and their History

By George Stammerjohan and John Kelly (November 1988)

Edited by Sean T, Malis, State Park Interpreter I, California State Parks (2008)

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When most people think of an army fort, images of John Wayne defending a small stockaded compound surrounded by Indians shooting flaming arrows into the fort come to mind. However, the popular image that Hollywood has worked hard to instill in our minds is far from reality. Fort Tejon and most forts in the American west during the nineteenth century resembled more of a campus like lay out and not the small walled forts of the American Northeast during the colonial era.

These forts served the Army as bases of operations, supply and training and staging areas. These garrisons were not built to be defended, but to launch patrols, expeditions and campaigns from. Fort Tejon was designed along this idea. The Fort was located in Cañada de las Uvas and located in valley hemmed in with high mountains all around.

Fort Tejon was situated in this mountain pass due to ready availability of water, forage and timber in good quantity near the fort. Grapevine Creek flows through the middle of the fort year round providing the garrison ample water for man and beast as well as cooking, construction and cleaning. Forage or feed for the hundreds of horses and mules was always in high demand for the army during this era. Timber for construction and fuel was readily available in the nearby mountains.



Contemporary sketch of Fort Tejon made by Brevet Major E. D. Townsend in October, 1855. View is looking north.



Contemporary sketch of Fort Tejon made by Brevet Major E. D. Townsend in October, 1855. View is looking southwest.

The structures of Fort Tejon are basically of adobe or are wood-framed. They are rectangular in shape, with wooden-framed gable roofs using a mixture of mortise and tenon joint construction and nailed lathing to make a ceiling. The lath and furring strips were then plastered with a burnt lime putty plaster. The roofs were shingled either with San Francisco Bay area redwood or with local pine. In the adobe buildings, the floors of planks rested on joists inserted into the adobe and pinned in place with wooden pins. Either civilian contractors or soldier-laborers supplied the adobe bricks. Both civilian employees and extra-duty soldiers employed by the Quartermaster Department performed all the remaining labor, such as masonry, carpentry, painting, etc. Nailing planks to the wooden frames probably finished the wooden structures. A government sawmill installed on modern-day Mount Pinos supplied lumber. All of the structures rested on stone foundations.

While few contemporary sketches of Fort Tejon exist. The one above was made by Brevet Major E. D. Townsend in October, 1855. In February 1859, Colonel Joseph K. F. Mansfield, Department of the Inspector General, visited Fort Tejon for a bi-annual inspection. His inspection report was accompanied by several sketch maps that showed to officials in Washington what was the basic layout of Fort Tejon and the surrounding countryside. The map, not drawn to scale by Colonel Mansfield, is reproduced on page. The Fort Tejon Map is updated to 1860 and numbered to correspond to the following building descriptions.

1. Officer's Quarters. Site of an officer's adobe house, which was apparently constructed in 1855-56. The structure was badly damaged in the January 1857, earthquake and subsequently dismantled. All that remains of the building is a line of foundation stones along the front of the structure. These stones are a schist-like metamorphic typical of the rough-quarried stones used throughout the garrison area. The remaining stones are almost flush with the soil surface. The identification of this structure is based on the Mansfield Map.

2. Kitchen. At least four of the structures in the garrison area at Fort Tejon had associated detached structures used as kitchens. Built at the same time as the house noted above, this structure was also damaged in January 1857, and taken down. The only evidence of the detached kitchen associated with structure 1 is a low ridge of earths about 70 feet south of the front foundation line of structure 1.

3. Headquarters and Band. This adobe building, built in 1855-56, was originally used as officer's quarters and open, in late 1856, converted to an office for regimental headquarters and the regimental band. Intending to return the structure to officer's quarters, the post commanding officer ordered the construction of new band quarters and an adjutant's office during the year, 1859-60. It is uncertain whether "this move ever took place. A ridge averaging 18 inches high and about 3 feet wide along the front side toward the parade ground identifies building 3. Foundation stones similar to those noted for structure 1 can be seen protruding from this ridge. Such stones can also be seen along the sides of the building with a low soil ridge along the rear. This structure is noted on the Mansfield Map and referenced in army records.

4. Kitchen. A ridge of soil identifies this detached adobe kitchen with occasional foundation stones. The ridge is in line with the ridge noted for structure 2 and is about 70 feet south of the front ridge of structure 3. The detached kitchens at Fort Tejon were probably connected with residences by a duckboard (plank) sidewalk.

5. Officer's Quarters. Although clearly noted on the Mansfield Map, this adobe structure exhibits no remains of foundations on the surface. The structure location can be determined with fair accuracy based on the Mansfield Map.

6. Kitchen. Again, there are no noted remains, and the location of the adobe structure is based on interpretation of the Mansfield Map.

7. Barracks 1. This building is one of only two standing structure at Fort Tejon which can be attributed to the period of army occupation, thus constituting a restored, and not reconstructed, structure. The adobe structure (112 feet long by 31 feet wide) was registered with the Historic American Building Survey in 1937. It was restored in 1948. The roof was raised, and pine shingles replaced the tin Tejon Ranch period roof. The gabled roof framework was saved and repaired. Approximately 40% of the western end was removed and replaced with modern adobe bricks manufactured from the remains of barracks 2. Floor planking was installed on the original joists in the east end and on replacement joists in the west end. Windows and doors were located and installed, and new stairs and landings constructed. The interior plastering was repaired and repainted.



Barracks Building No. 1. Photo circa 1888.



Barracks Building No. 1. Photo circa 1940.

"Prussian Blue" color. Doors, windows, and fixtures, which would have been supplied by the quartermaster's depot in Benicia, were generally finished in dark "Prussian Blue".

The barracks is now refurbished to the period of Dragoon occupation of the fort and constituted a principal portion of current interpretation of the U.S. Army occupation of the site.

8. Kitchen/Mess. This structure consisted of a kitchen with a metal range, and a mess (or dining) room. The stone foundation was laid in 1856, and the adobe-walled, wood-shingle-roofed structure was

The original barracks was begun in 1854 and was available for occupancy in the fall of 1855. The structure of adobe sits on a foundation of stone quarried from modern-day Johnson Canyon. This building probably had imported redwood shingles placed on a gabled framework of local pine. For economy reasons, this structure and the other adobes at Fort Tejon were never truly finished. While the interiors were completed with lath and plaster in what is termed a "hard finish", the exterior walls were unfinished and were never whitewashed.

The wood for trim and framing was cut locally and installed uncured, causing shrinking and warping. Paint used on the wood was probably a "burnt cream" or



An artist's rendering of the Kitchen / Messhall with Barracks Building No. 1 in the background. By David Tinnon, 1999.

completed in 1857. The only surface remnant of this adobe structure is an amorphous mound of soil. This was the second detached kitchen/mess for barracks 1. Based on an incomplete topographic survey conducted in 1935, the stone foundation corners of this building show that it measured about 21 feet by 71 feet. These dimensions fit with the Mansfield Map and other descriptions.

9. Kitchen/Mess. In late 1856, a log cabin with a canvas roof was constructed by Company A to serve as its kitchen and mess room when the neighboring structure, barracks 2, was converted back into a barracks from temporary use as a mess. There are no known remains of this structure, and the location is approximate.

10. Barracks 2. Begun in 1854 as a barracks, this structure was altered into a kitchen/mess in 1855 and realtered into a barracks in 1856, when it was decided to station two companies of troops at Fort Tejon. The structure survived into the 20th Century, the west end becoming the Tejon Ranch blacksmith shop. This end of the building survived until it collapsed during the 1956 earthquake. The foundation lines for the roughly "J"-shaped building are clearly seen on the surface, and two small adobe wall stubs can be seen along the front (north) side of the building near the west end.



Ruins of Barracks Building No. 2 circa 1900.

11. Kitchen/Mess. This mess was constructed and reconstructed in 1858-60 and finished late in the summer of 1860. The remains of the structure are identical to structure 8. The 1935 survey also identified this building as having a 21-foot by 71-foot foundation.

12-13. Stables. The two stables were started in the summer of 1859. The army employed Indian labor. The walls were erected, as was the framework for the roofs. The roofs were not shingled. During construction, one of the structures (#12?) was altered to become a barracks for the regimental band. Heavy

winter rains and an earthquake in late November 1859, destroyed both structures, along with Company B's proposed kitchen/mess (#11). Work began again during the spring of 1860. The kitchen/mess was finished, the fate of structures 12 and 13 is uncertain. The band quarters appears to have been finished, ready for occupation by late 1860. These structures are known from the Mansfield Map and correspondence regarding their construction. There has been no identification of remains on the surface during the period of state ownership. As shown on the Mansfield Map, these were long buildings identified as contemplated stables.



Barracks Building No. 2 showing southwestern end after being converted into a Blacksmith's Shop during ranch period.

14. Cellar (?). The remains of this structure consist of a 16-foot by 17-foot pit lined with typical foundation stones and cut slightly into the hillside. The existence of this pit has been known for at least fifteen years-. It was identified as a health and safety hazard and filled in 1982. Before filling, it was noted that the pit is rock-lined throughout and was about 8 feet deep. Though this "cellar" may date from the ranch period, it is possible that it is the remains of an enlisted men's privy. Recent (August, 1988) minimal excavations to uncover the foundation perimeter resulted in the discovery of the remains of adobe bricks adhering to the foundation surface. Careful removal of the 1982 fill and subsequent archeological excavation could result in a use determination for this structure. If it is a privy , it would be the first discovered at Fort Tejon. Because they were often



Reconstruction of Officers Quarters almost complete, circa 1957.

used for the disposal of garbage, privies often offer the archeologist the most complete set of material culture remains for an historic site.

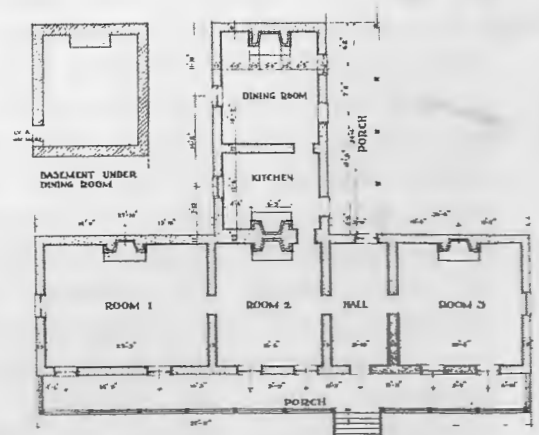


Central Officer's Quarters Building, circa 1900.

15. Officer's Quarters. This appears to be the southernmost structure on "Officer's Row. These three adobe buildings were probably one and one-half stories, with attached kitchen structures and pine shingles. These houses were started in early 1855 and finished in 1857. There is some debate centering on whether these were full two story structures.

The building on site was constructed by the Department of Parks and Recreation during the period of restoration of barracks 1, 1948-53. Based on the

Mansfield Map and the 1935 incomplete survey, it appears that the current structure sits on the original stone foundation Foot print. Based on the 1937 HABS photograph of structure 16, the current adobe structure is a fairly accurate reproduction of the original building. It is a two-story adobe structure with partially finished cellar and a covered 'wood front (east) porch. Although attached by a shared wall, the kitchen can only be entered through an exterior south-facing door. This building is currently refurbished as an officer's residence and, along with barracks 1, constitutes the principal interpretation of army life at Fort Tejon.



STRUCTURE 16 -
Officers quarters showing Tejon Ranch period additions.
Structure burned in late 1930s leaving only foundations.
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[De Long 1980]

16. Officer's Quarters. By tradition, the site of the senior officer's quarters, the remains of this building consist of easily identified lines of stone foundations and ridges of adobe soil. Probably constructed as a mirror image of structure 15, this building appears to have been added to during the ranch period. The south wing, small porch foundation on the east (front) side, and west cellar are the most evident additions. There are several photographs of this building taken during the ranch period and one in the HABS nomination. The building burned some time after the HABS nomination was prepared in 1937.



Westernmost Officer's Quarters, circa 1888. Showing signs of razing.

structures 16 and 17 had detached shared-wall kitchens similar to structure 15. There are no known photographs of this structure, although it is noted on the Mansfield Map and in the incomplete 1935 survey.

18. Flagpole. This is the approximate traditional location of flagpoles erected by the army. There are no surface remains.

19. Officer's Quarters. This is a small standing adobe which is commonly called the "Orderly's Quarters". Recent research indicates that this two-room adobe with central fireplace was more likely junior officer's quarters and was possibly the last adobe building erected during the U.S. Army period at the post. The building had a wood frame addition during the ranch period, and the stone foundation from that addition can still be seen north of the adobe. It is not known whether the framed portion dates to the army period. The structure had been stabilized several times during state ownership, the most recent addition being external adobe buttresses after the building sustained earthquake damage during the 1960's. It is currently screened off and contains no

17. Officer's Quarters. The remains of this building are also easily seen in the form of stone foundations and adobe soil ridges. Along with 15 and 16, this building formed the upper or west end of the parade ground. The existing foundations are probably very close to those of structure 16 before the ranch additions. It is probable that both



Officer's or Orderlies Quarters, circa 1940.



Hospital Building showing missing roof over southwest end of structure. Circa 1888.

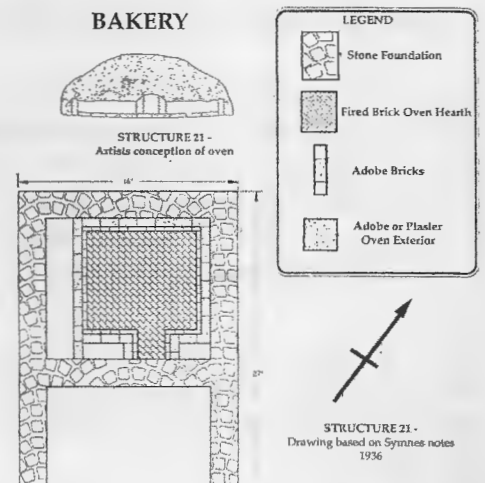
interpretive displays.



Hospital Building looking west. Circa 1888.

20. Hospital. This adobe structure housed the post hospital, commissary, and ordnance storage and was 133 feet long by 33 feet wide. There were long verandas along both the north and south sides of the hospital portion (eastern three-quarters) of the building. The hospital may also have been the home of from two to four senior non-commissioned officers. There are photographs of the east end of the structure taken while it was used as a residence during the ranch period. Archeological research conducted on the hospital foundations in 1982 revealed a footprint which agrees with the incomplete survey of 1935 but disagrees with the Mansfield Map. The difference could be attributed to large wood-framed porch/veranda structures on three sides of the building.

21. Bakery. The post bakery was a two-room adobe structure built in 1854-55, with the oven in the interior room. The building was 16 feet by 27 feet, on a stone foundation, with the brick oven on a raised stone foundation. Although the perimeter foundation was clearly identified in the incomplete 1935 survey, only the brick oven foundation can today be seen in a field of nettles.



22 & 23. Cisterns (Spring Boxes/Wells). One of the reasons Major Donaldson chose this site for the construction of Fort Tejon was the well-watered flat known as "Traveler's Rest" (circa 1853-1854). Near the hospital are two wells, or improved springs. These two circular mortared brick and stone enclosures are of indeterminate origin. The notes from the 1935 survey indicate that the surveyors dug out these boxes and found them to have rock-lined bottoms covered over with sand. They could be army period or later in origin. The earliest known identification of them is in the 1935 survey.

24. Lebec Tree and Monument. This memorial to mountain man, Peter Lebeck (surname spelling variable), killed and buried near the tree in 1837, is adequately addressed in the Interpretive Element and is interpreted in the Visitor Center.

25. Officer's Quarters. Based on the Mansfield Map and the 1935 survey, this adobe structure was probably a junior officer's duplex with each half containing two rooms, with two hearths on a single flue. The structure is described as about 36 feet wide and 66 feet long. The 1935 survey supports these dimensions. All



that remains today is a single line of foundation stones imbedded in an adobe soil ridge along what would have been the south side, or front, of the building.



View of Jr. Officer's Quarters and detached Kitchen ruins. Circa 1888.

26. Kitchen. This detached adobe 28-foot by 28-foot kitchen exhibits two rough lines of foundation stones remaining along the south and west sides. Again, the original measurements are supported by the 1935 survey.

27. Prison. The post prison and accompanying guardroom were two 12-foot by 16-foot stoutly build frame buildings. The prison contained three small cells off a narrow hallway. These two buildings were reputedly replaced by the construction of a

combined prison/guardroom (#33) at a site now located under Interstate 5. Volunteers from the Fort Tejon Historical Association have recently reconstructed both the prison and guardroom. The location of these two small structures and size of one of them was verified through an archeological investigation conducted in 1984.

28. Guardroom. This small frame structure is the same size and shape as the adjacent prison. The guardroom consisted of a single room with the only door on the southeast corner facing south.

29. Frame Structure. This is the approximate site of a long wood frame structure built as a temporary officer's residence pending construction of more permanent quarters. The structure's long axis (48 feet) paralleled Grapevine Creek, and there was an attached kitchen on the south end. It appears that the officers opted for framed and floored wall tents near the west end of the parade ground. It is possible that the structure was later used to house the post laundresses. A water line trench and excavation for septic vaults in recent years have shown no evidence of foundations in this area.

30. Kilns. Again, the location is approximate and based on the Mansfield Map. Research indicates that the army and/or civilian contractors built one or two adobe kilns with tall narrow chimney(s) and fired both clay and adobe bricks in it (them). No evidence of foundations has ever been noted in this area.

Post Sawmill. In February, 1859, the government sawmill, a Page circular sawmill, was moved from Mt. Pinos to a location on Grapevine Creek at the post. The exact spot is currently unknown. The mill was horse powered. The post quartermaster, Lt. H. B. Davidson, had plans to convert the mill to waterpower. The department quartermaster refused to authorize the necessary funds. The mill continued to use horsepower and was in operation on the post by early March, 1859.

When the post was closed in 1864, the mill was acquired by John Cuddy and moved back near its original Mt. Pinos location.

Post Cemetery and Castor Monument. The army cemetery was abandoned in 1864. In 1928, the Fort Tejon Research Committee of Bakersfield wrote to the War Department, asking about the Fort Tejon cemetery. The army responded with surprise. They could find no record of a post cemetery or the removal of the army's dead. They did send an inaccurate list of dead reputedly buried there. Whether civilians were

buried at the post cemetery or not is unknown. It would appear that the graves of the six enlisted men buried between 1855 and 1864 are still at the post cemetery.

The cemetery site was recently been identified through photographic evidence from the ranch period. It appears that this is the only such military cemetery on state park property.

The Castor Monument is a marble memorial stone now encased in a mortared rock cairn. After the death of Lt. Thomas Castor, the only officer to die while on duty at Fort Tejon, he was temporarily buried near the Lebec Tree. His fellow officers erected the marble memorial stone in the post cemetery. After the property was acquired by the Department of Parks and Recreation, the broken stone was encased in a mortared rock cairn and moved to a better viewing location near structure 15. The recent identification of the cemetery location resulted in the removal of the memorial to that site.

While structures #9, 29, and 31 are noted in this summary, none of the small outbuildings, such as privies, chicken sheds, cow sheds, wood sheds, wash racks, clothes lines, yard fences, etc., have been mentioned due to the difficulty of positively identifying their locations. Col. Mansfield recorded the locations of none of the temporary buildings even though there is frequent mention of them in quartermaster correspondence.

Buildings 33-42 are not on Fort Tejon State Historic Park property and are sited either beneath the structure of Interstate 5 or on property across the freeway owned by the Tejon Ranch Company. They are

*Ruins of the Quartermaster's Shops looking southwest toward
the Parade ground.*



listed here as an attempt to complete the description of historic Fort Tejon.

33. Guardhouse. A new adobe guardhouse (guardroom and cells) was under construction in 1859. Its completion date is currently unknown. It was located about 125 yards east of the current visitor center, and its site is under the northbound lanes of Interstate 5. Portions of the building were removed to the Gorman area at the turn of this century and were used as part of a creamery or cheese-making structure. Some years ago, the creamery was demolished and two of the original windows of the guardhouse were given to the park. This building is shown on both the Mansfield Map and the 1935 survey. There are differences, however. The 1935 survey recorded the foundation's long axis running east-west rather than north-south, as noted on the Mansfield Map.
34. Quartermaster's Warehouse. This structure (site approximate), built in 1854 and 1855, was still unfinished following the earthquake of January, 1857. It needed major repair to one of the gable ends and was in need of a floor of wooden planks. Colonel Mansfield indicated the structures "supernumerary", or extra, in early 1859. It is possible, though not documented, that the post laundresses may have lived there.
35. Office and Storehouse. This is the site of the office and storehouse of the quartermaster depot of Fort Tejon. It was apparently constructed in 1855-56. This was an adobe structure with wood-shingled roof.
36. Quartermaster's Shops. This is the site of the blacksmith, wheel-wright, and carpenter's shops for the quartermaster depot. The three-room, wood-shingled adobe structure was built in late 1857 or early 1858.
37. Mule Corral and Hay Storage. These adobe-walled corrals were built by hired Indian labor.
38. Company Stable. The structure on this site may have been the first stable constructed. It was build of wooden slabs set upright in mud sill with a canvas roof. This stable built in 1854, was noted as having a rotten canvas roof in 1857, and as wood-shingled in 1859.
39. Stable. This wood-framed planked and wood-shingled stable was probably built in 1857.
40. Company Granary and Saddle (Tack) Room, This building was a small wood-framed, wood-shingled structure. It was used for grain and saddle and tack storage. The building was probably the work site for the company saddler(s). A saddler was responsible for maintaining and repairing saddles and other horse gear .He also supervised the storage of like equipment. When two companies were present, it appears that both saddlers used the facility.
41. Company Blacksmith/Shop. Each company of mounted troops had an enlisted specialist called a "farrier/blacksmith" who was responsible for shoeing and fitting spare shoes for the company's horses. There are currently no known descriptions of this building. However, the interior would have been similar to any small black-smith shop of the period.
42. Sutlery and Overland Mail. This is the approximate site of two or more structures. The two main buildings were adobe and are noted as the only hard-finished (plastered inside and outside) structures associated with the post. The sutlery was started by Phineas T. Banning of San Pedro and operated by George C. Alexander, who took over as the licensed sutler, or post trader, of Fort Tejon in 1856.'This was also the Overland Mail Company station, post office, justice court, and, after October 1860, probably the telegraph office.

Fort Tejon Map

Drawn by *Colonel Joseph K. F. Mansfield*,
Department of the Inspector General
 on February 1859.

