

# Bypaths of Kansas History

FORT RILEY IN 1865

From a letter in the "Javan B. Irvine Collection," Historical Resource Center of South Dakota, Pierre, *courtesy* Dayton W. Canaday, director.

FORT RILEY, KANSAS.  
September 20th 1865.

MY DEAR WIFE:

The reception of your letter of the 4th inst, this morning was one of those pleasing episodes in military life which tend to enliven the dull routine, and break up the monotony usually attendant on the same, and peculiarly incident to posts so far removed from the bustle and hum of civilization.

You will have learned ere this reaches you, of the transition of myself and effects to this post, and therefore it will not be necessary to recapitulate what you have already heard, and what the date of this letter so palpably exhibits; suffice it to say, that I continue in good health, and am as usual, overwhelmed with business, that while others are languishing with ennui, I am happily exempt from all symptoms which will lead to anything more serious than a bad humor.

This post is one of the best west of St. Louis, but is now sadly out of repair, the volunteers having handled it rather roughly, and there being no permanent garrison stationed here to preserve it and keep it in repair; it was built by Major Ogden, a relative of Mrs. Holton of Alton, and is as perfect an illustration of the exactitude and red tapeism of the Regular Army, as, perhaps, can be found in the country, every building is a perfect counterpart of some other building, both in size, style and finish, so that, as General Sanborn says, "if you would place them in the scales they would exactly balance, there being, to all appearances, not one more pound of brick, stone or mortar used in one than in another": the grounds are laid out in conformity with the points of the compass, with the variations of the needle taken out, or added, each wall, mantle piece or closet, running due North and South or East and West.

Each building for officers quarters are double, . . . there are 3 large rooms on the ground floor in the main building and 4 closets, a hall and stairway, and a kitchen in rear, with porch between that and dining room, and a porch in front of the whole building, the ceilings are 11½ feet high, the walls and ceilings have been painted so that they may be cleaned by washing. There are four rooms up stairs with closets, but the ceilings are not so high: The post is finely located on an elevated plateau, with a range of bluffs to the north, and the Kansas River with its bordering of green trees skirting the south, and the valley of the Kansas in all its richness and beauty running east and west.

I have not time to elaborate a description of the Post and its surroundings, nor to give a satisfactory diagram, thereof, but I hope sufficient is shown to give you some idea of our situation; the buildings are all of stone and very substantial, there are porches both in front and rear of the mens quarters, fire places for burning wood in all the quarters, and cellars under the kitchens of same size, all nicely plastered, good cisterns are attached to all the quarters, and

the yards to each set of quarters nicely fenced in separately, but the fences are now torn down, and the post in consequence, is somewhat dilapidated in its appearance.

It is rumored here that the Hd. Qrs. of the Regt, is ordered to Fort Leavenworth, and although we have no official information of the fact, still I am inclined to believe it from information received while at Jefferson Barracks.

I am glad to learn that you are making some progress in settling my affairs. I hope you will succeed in proving yourself an able financier, and succeed in liquidating all my old liabilities in order that I may start fair with the world again.

Excuse the shortness of my epistles, but the multiplicity of duties compels me to make them brief.

Remember me in love to all, and believe me as ever

Mrs. M. L. Irvine  
St. Paul, Minn.

Yours

JAVAN B. IRVINE

HEAD QUARTERS FORT RILEY Ks  
September 18th 1865

SPECIAL ORDERS  
No. 236

VII. *1st Lt. E. F. Hinds* 2d U. S. Infy. Vols. is hereby relieved from duty as Post Adjt, and will report to his Compy. for duty.

VIII. *1st Lt. Javan B. Irvin* Co. A' 13th U. S. Infy., in connection with his other duties, is hereby appointed Post adjutant, and will be obeyed and Respected accordingly.

[Signed]

J R KING LT. COL.  
2d US Infy Vols  
Com of Post.

C. O. 1st Battln  
13th U. S. Infy.  
Fort Riley Ks

A LAST BUFFALO HUNT

From the *Sherman County Republican*, Sherman Center, June 24, 1887.

The herd of buffalo that was chased into this county last week took a northwesterly direction into Cheyenne county, where they were pursued and five of them killed. When the hunters came upon them the buffalo turned on the team and killed one of the horses, and in shooting, the men killed the other horse. They had nothing but No. 36 Smith & Wesson revolvers and it took ten shots from one of these at close range to bring the infuriated buffalo down. While these men in the wagon were having this fight two more hunters with rifles rode up and succeeded in killing all the buffalo but one that was in the herd.