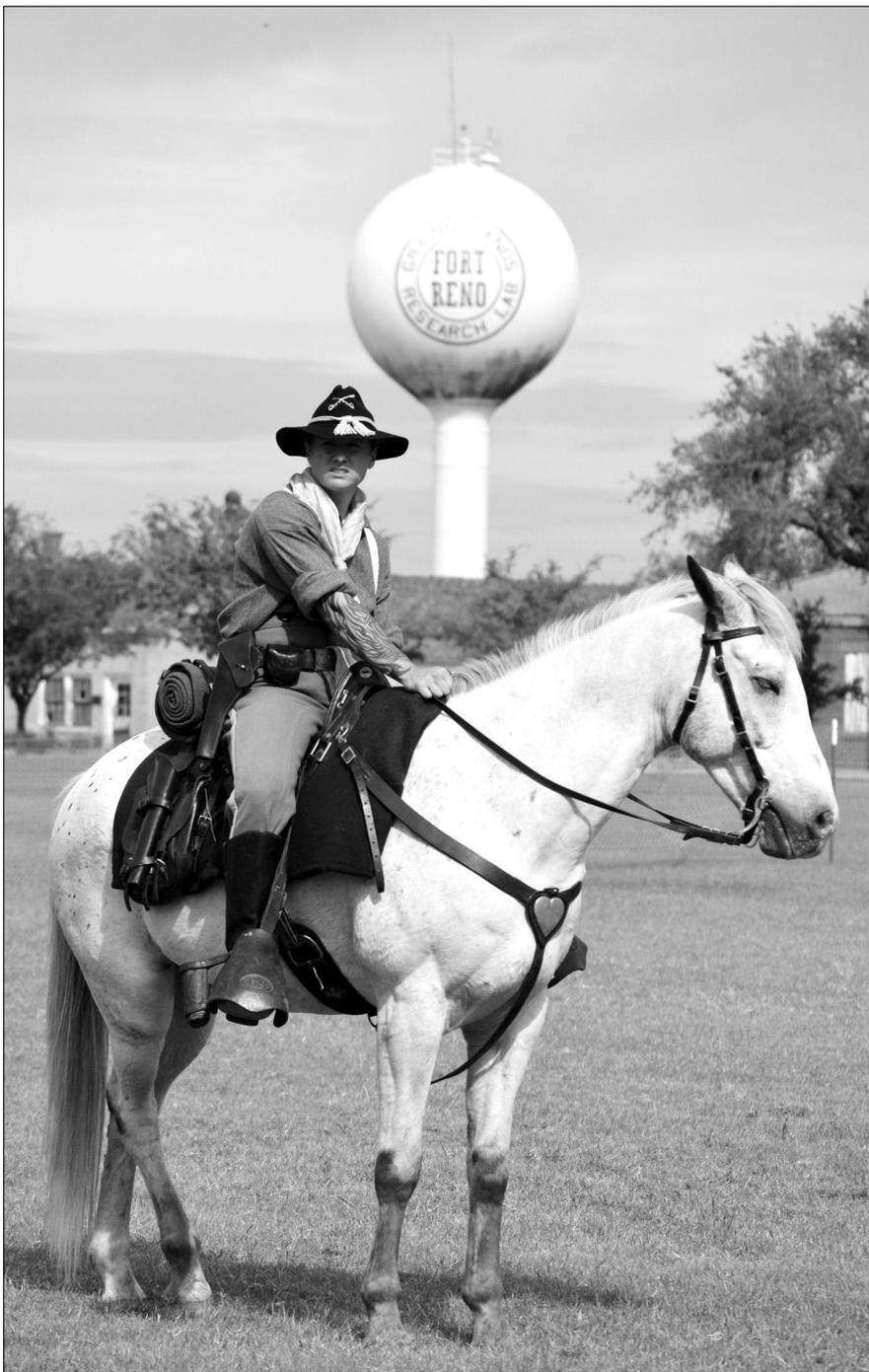


Travel back in time

Explore history and the paranormal at Fort Reno



By Traci Chapman
Staff Writer

For those who like history and the paranormal, one western Canadian County site offers both – Fort Reno.

Fort Reno's history began in 1874, when the site was established as a military camp. Set up to protect the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes members at the request of Darlington Indian Agency, the fort was officially named after fallen Civil War Union Major Gen. Jesse Reno.

Serving as a cavalry post for many years, in 1908, Fort Reno was redesignated one of three Army Quartermaster Remount Stations in the country; specializing in horse and mule training and breeding, the Fort through World Wars I and II handled more than 14,000 animals, historians said.

Also during World War II, 94 acres of Fort Reno was again repurposed – this time as a prisoner of war camp. Holding German and Italian prisoners, many of whom served in North Africa, more than 1,300 men were held at the camp.

Many of those who lived – and died – at Fort Reno are interred in the fort's historic cemetery, located on a windy hill west of the main square.

While the fort remains a historic site, it is also a working facility – U.S. Department of Agriculture's Grazingland's Research Laboratory has operated at Fort Reno since shortly after the end of World War II.

Ghost Tours

The fort's ghostly history is a boon for paranormal researchers and enthusiasts. During the summer and

early fall, Fort Reno hosts its Ghost Tours, walking tours of the areas "haunted" areas. One of the fort's most popular events, ghost tours have helped spread the word about Fort Reno, bringing in visitors for other events held there, such as the annual Tombstone Tales, which take place every September, and the Candlelight Tours, historically held in May.

Most of the buildings are not open to the public, because of lead paint, asbestos and other safety issues. Small groups walk around the fort, hearing about the ghostly Paranormal groups have long been drawn to Fort Reno, not just because of its well-known cemetery located on a wind-swept hill, but also because of stories of past inhabitants. Researchers' work at the site has encompassed many of the site's building's built at varying times during the 1800s and into the 1900s, including the fort's chapel, constructed by German and Italian prisoners held at Historic Fort Reno when it was a Prisoner of War camp during World War II.

Reported paranormal activity on the fort ranges from "very little" to "serious," among the fort's buildings. Researchers said they have had few ghostly encounters in the chapel, built by German prisoners of war during World War II, but the "old Victorian" is another story.

The Victorian is a large home, built "in the middle of nowhere," which volunteers believe came about when a well-to-do father learned his daughter was living in a tent with her husband, a cavalry officer stationed at the fort.

Of all of the buildings at Fort Reno,

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-Traci Chapman

Fort Reno boasts beautiful scenery, history and the paranormal, as well as the annual U.S. Cavalry National Competition.