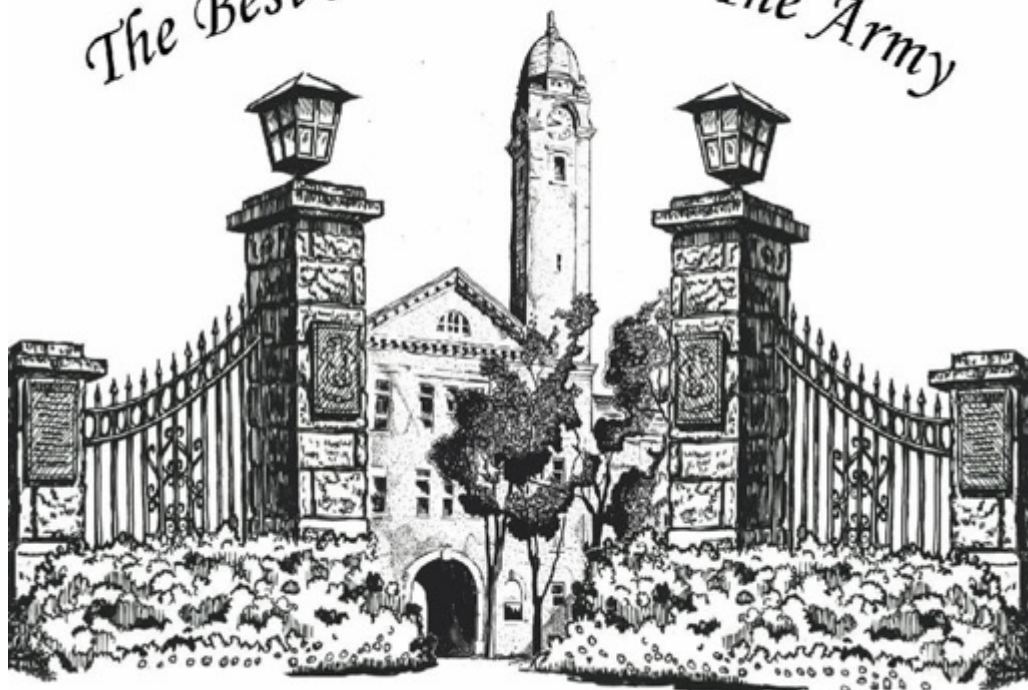


Fort Leavenworth

FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS

The Best Hometown In The Army



Established 1827

I was surprised to discover that, at the age of 68, the great-grandmother of one of my aunts listed as her place of residence on the Federal Census, Fort Leavenworth Military Reservation in Kansas. The only thing I knew about Fort Leavenworth was its reputation as a federal prison so I wondered what she had done to get herself locked up alongside such notable criminals as Machine Gun Kelly, Whitey Bulger, James Earl Ray, and Robert Stroud (aka the Birdman of Alcatraz). Turns out, it was just her home.

Historically known as the intellectual center of the Army, Fort Leavenworth was established in 1827 by Col. Henry Leavenworth on land acquired during the Louisiana Purchase. It was originally established in order to protect settlers and

merchants who were traveling west along the Santa Fe Trail. Not really a fort in the traditional sense of the word, but designed more like a residential settlement, it continued to be a valuable military base through the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, and the Indian Wars. It is the oldest active military installation west of the Mississippi; third oldest in the United States.

In 1866, following an act of Congress, the 10th Cavalry Regiment was formed at Fort Leavenworth. This all black division under the command of Col. Benjamin Grierson became known as the "Buffalo Soldiers", a name respectfully given to them by the Kiowa Indians.

After the Indian Wars, the fort was transitioned to a military training facility. In 1881 General William T. Sherman established what was to become the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. Graduates who passed through its school were George S. Marshall, Dwight D. Eisenhower, George C. Patton, Douglas MacArthur and Colin Powell.

My relative, Sarah Desson Smith who in 1910 was widowed, was living there with her son, and his family. Lewis Smith was the commissary sergeant for the compound, providing food and supplies for soldiers and their families stationed there.

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