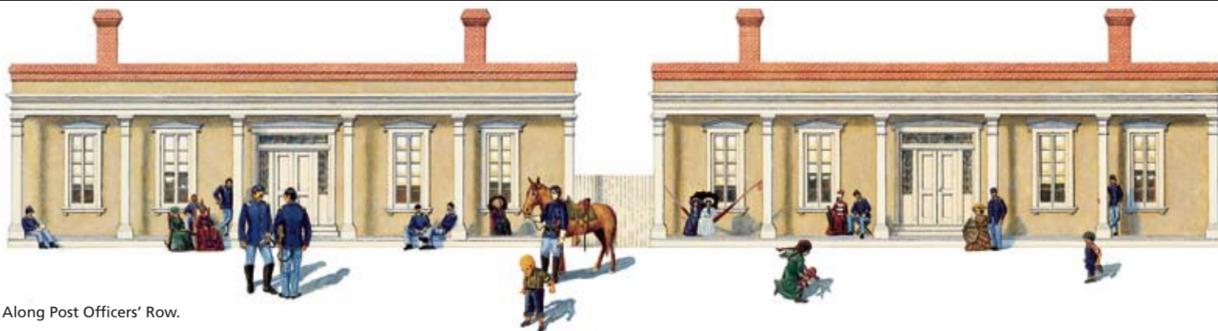


# Touring Fort Union



Along Post Officers' Row.

Fort Union National Monument is 28 miles north of Las Vegas, N. Mex., on I-25. Take exit 366 and then drive eight miles west on N. Mex. 161. The park is open every day from 8 am–6 pm, Memorial Day through Labor Day; 8 am–4 pm the rest of the year. It is closed Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1. There are no camping facilities, but picnic tables, drinking water, and modern restrooms are provided. Las Vegas has food, lodging, and auto, medical, and camping services.

The ruins of Fort Union are an impressive memorial to the men and women who won the West. It may be difficult, however, to look at these melted adobe walls and the few chimneys that rise above ground level and realize that this was once the largest U.S. military installation on the 19th-century southwestern frontier. The diagram below, which you should use while touring the ruins, is an attempt to recapture something of the size, appearance, and functions of the original Fort Union complex.

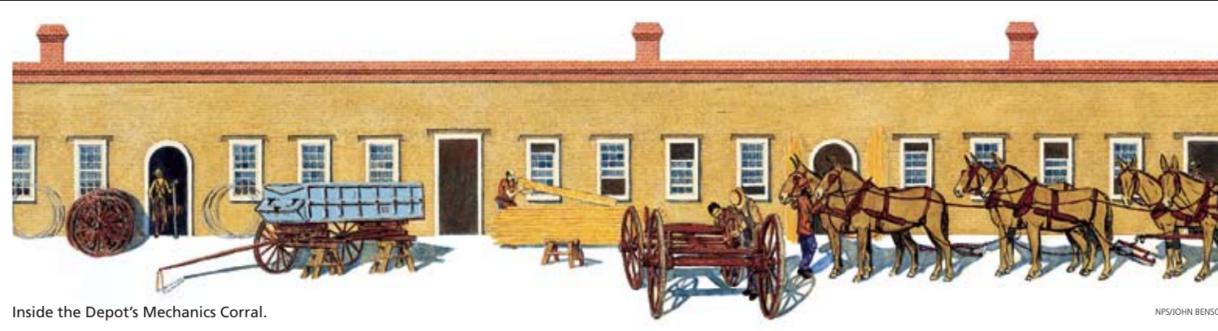
The stone building foundations and some of the adobe walls are still visible, so you should have no difficulty matching what you see on the site to appropriate locations on the diagram. A self-guiding trail (shown in white on the diagram) leads through the ruins and to the remains of the second fort erected during the Civil War. The ruins of the ordnance depot are visible across the valley to the west, on the first fort site.

**More Information**  
Fort Union National Monument  
P.O. Box 127  
Watrous, NM 87753  
505-425-8025  
www.nps.gov/foun

Fort Union is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).



Post Officers' Quarters



Inside the Depot's Mechanics Corral.



Mechanics Corral



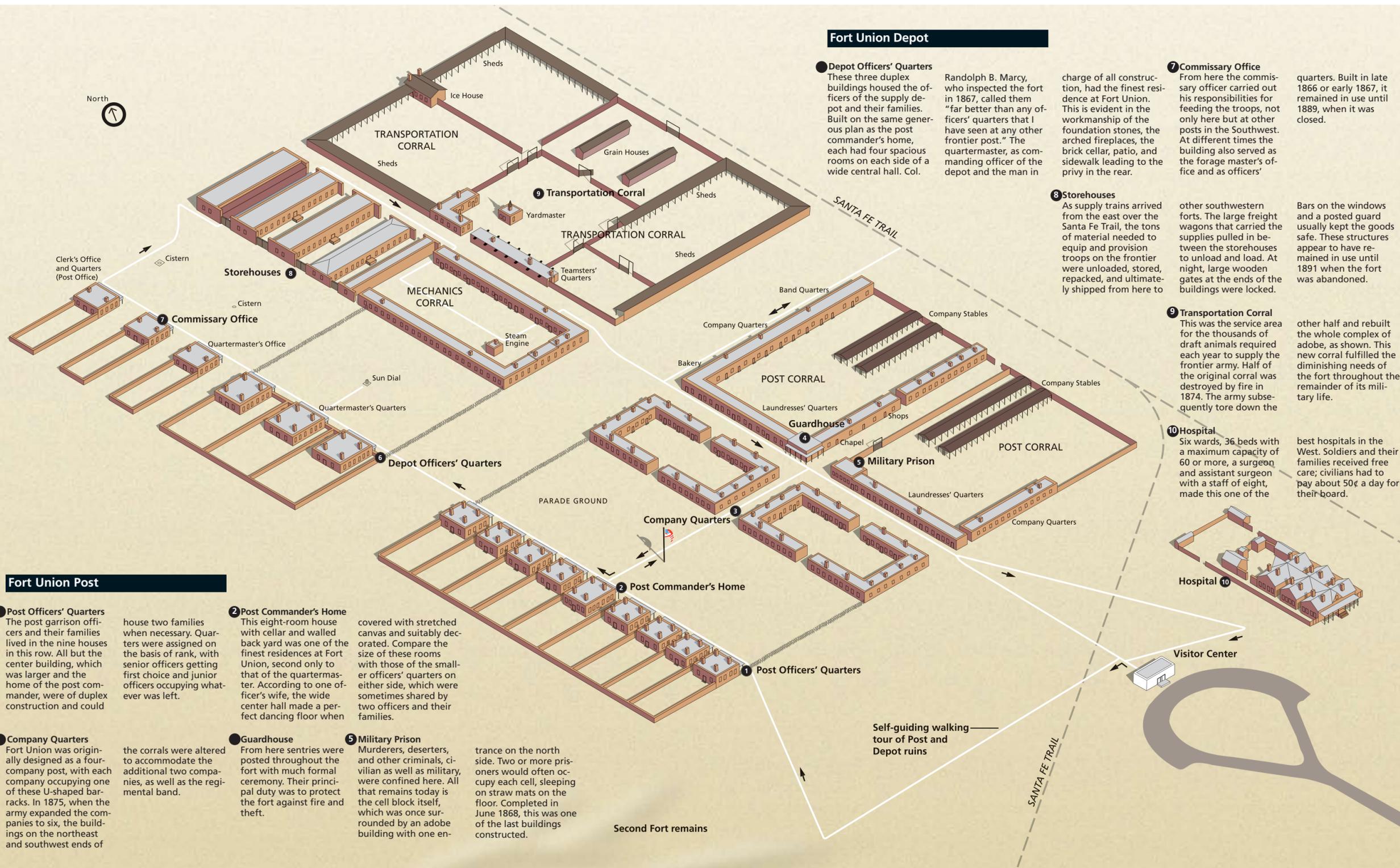
Post Commander's Home

**A word of caution:** Fort Union is being preserved as an outdoor museum. While every effort has been made to provide for your safety, you must remain alert and exercise caution during your visit. The ruins, though stabilized, can fall if climbed on. Stay on the established paths and be alert for rattlesnakes when the ground is warm. If you do encounter one, back away slowly, go around it, and report it to a park ranger.

Also, thunderstorms with accompanying lightning, hail, strong winds, and an occasional tornado are common during summer afternoons. Be alert, watch the clouds.

Remember, too, that it is against the law in all NPS areas to pick up artifacts, plants, animals, and minerals. Look at them. Enjoy them. Leave them for others to enjoy.

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## Fort Union Depot

**1 Depot Officers' Quarters**  
These three duplex buildings housed the officers of the supply depot and their families. Built on the same generous plan as the post commander's home, each had four spacious rooms on each side of a wide central hall. Col.

Randolph B. Marcy, who inspected the fort in 1867, called them "far better than any of officers' quarters that I have seen at any other frontier post." The quartermaster, as commanding officer of the depot and the man in

charge of all construction, had the finest residence at Fort Union. This is evident in the workmanship of the foundation stones, the arched fireplaces, the brick cellar, patio, and sidewalk leading to the privy in the rear.

**7 Commissary Office**  
From here the commissary officer carried out his responsibilities for feeding the troops, not only here but at other posts in the Southwest. At different times the building also served as the forage master's office and as officers'

quarters. Built in late 1866 or early 1867, it remained in use until 1889, when it was closed.

**8 Storehouses**  
As supply trains arrived from the east over the Santa Fe Trail, the tons of material needed to equip and provision troops on the frontier were unloaded, stored, repacked, and ultimately shipped from here to

other southwestern forts. The large freight wagons that carried the supplies pulled in between the storehouses to unload and load. At night, large wooden gates at the ends of the buildings were locked.

Bars on the windows and a posted guard usually kept the goods safe. These structures appear to have remained in use until 1891 when the fort was abandoned.

**9 Transportation Corral**  
This was the service area for the thousands of draft animals required each year to supply the frontier army. Half of the original corral was destroyed by fire in 1874. The army subsequently tore down the

other half and rebuilt the whole complex of adobe, as shown. This new corral fulfilled the diminishing needs of the fort throughout the remainder of its military life.

**10 Hospital**  
Six wards, 36 beds with a maximum capacity of 60 or more, a surgeon and assistant surgeon with a staff of eight, made this one of the

best hospitals in the West. Soldiers and their families received free care; civilians had to pay about 50¢ a day for their board.

## Fort Union Post

**1 Post Officers' Quarters**  
The post garrison officers and their families lived in the nine houses in this row. All but the center building, which was larger and the home of the post commander, were of duplex construction and could

house two families when necessary. Quarters were assigned on the basis of rank, with senior officers getting first choice and junior officers occupying whatever was left.

**3 Company Quarters**  
Fort Union was originally designed as a four-company post, with each company occupying one of these U-shaped barracks. In 1875, when the army expanded the companies to six, the buildings on the northeast and southwest ends of

the corrals were altered to accommodate the additional two companies, as well as the regimental band.

**2 Post Commander's Home**  
This eight-room house with cellar and walled back yard was one of the finest residences at Fort Union, second only to that of the quartermaster. According to one officer's wife, the wide center hall made a perfect dancing floor when

covered with stretched canvas and suitably decorated. Compare the size of these rooms with those of the smaller officers' quarters on either side, which were sometimes shared by two officers and their families.

**4 Guardhouse**  
From here sentries were posted throughout the fort with much formal ceremony. Their principal duty was to protect the fort against fire and theft.

**5 Military Prison**  
Murderers, deserters, and other criminals, civilian as well as military, were confined here. All that remains today is the cell block itself, which was once surrounded by an adobe building with one entrance on the north side. Two or more prisoners would often occupy each cell, sleeping on straw mats on the floor. Completed in June 1868, this was one of the last buildings constructed.

Second Fort remains

Self-guiding walking tour of Post and Depot ruins

SANTA FE TRAIL