



Name of Property: Fort Smith (updated documentation and boundary change)
City, State: Fort Smith, Arkansas
Period of Significance: 1817-1896
NHL Criteria: 1 and 2
NHL Theme: IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
2. Governmental Institutions
3. Military Institutions and Activities
VIII. Changing Role of the United States in the World Community
3. Expansionism and Imperialism
4. Immigration and Emigration Policies

Previous Recognition: 1960 National Historic Landmark
1986 National Register of Historic Places
National Historic Site

National Historic Context: VII. Political and Military Affairs, 1865-1939
B. The Republican Era, 1877-1900
X. Westward Expansion of the British Colonies and the United States, 1763-1898
C. Military-Aboriginal American Contact and Conflict
1. East of the Mississippi, 1763-1850s
2. The Southern Plains

NHL Significance:

- Fort Smith played a central role in the development of American Indian policy by the United States government. The physical changes and the use of the fort over time, beginning with the first Fort Smith (1817), through the second Fort Smith (1838-1846), and finally as the location of a U.S. District Court (1871-1896), mirrored the evolution of



Federal policies governing American Indian status during these periods.

- The original role of the fort was to control Osage and Cherokee conflicts and maintain the frontier line west of the Mississippi River. Later, it became a way station and supply depot during the Trail of Tears, specifically the removal of the Choctaw tribe from Mississippi to lands in the West.
- After its reestablishment in 1839, Fort Smith garrisons patrolled, protected, and supplied the federally-created Indian Territory, and served as a supply depot for other forts as the frontier moved further westward.
- From 1871 to 1896, Fort Smith served as the U.S. District Court for the District of Western Arkansas and the Indian Territory. Fort Smith is also significant under Criterion 2 as the location of all but the last two years of Judge Isaac C. Parker's twenty-one year judicial career (from 1875 to 1896) as District Court Judge. Judge Parker sought to protect the rights of the American Indian while reigning in the outlaw abuses of the frontier. His strict and often controversial interpretation of Federal law aided in the taming of the "wild west," and unwittingly paved the way for the dismantling of the discrete Indian Territory and tribal sovereignty in favor of the new U.S. territory of Oklahoma.

Integrity:

- Located at Belle Point, the rocky promontory on the Arkansas River selected by Major Long in 1817 for the fort site, the original locations of the first and second forts are still evident.
- Many alterations to the forts and their setting occurred in the nineteenth century during the period of significance. The National Park Service reversed other intrusive changes to the setting by removing buildings and streets that developed across the fort site during the early twentieth century.
- The sense of place for the two forts remains through the excavated footprint of the first fort and the footprints of the second fort's wall and officers' quarters. Parts of the first fort's foundation walls remained and were used to develop the exposed outline of the first fort. Restored resources such as the second fort's parade ground and flagstaff, also contribute to the setting of Fort Smith.
- The remaining above-ground buildings in the second fort, the commissary and the barracks/courthouse with its 1888 jail wing, had design changes that occurred during the period of significance that represent the evolution of the function and use of the fort over time. The commissary building is particularly intact to its historic period. There are numerous construction details in the extant buildings: tool marks on cut or hammered stone walls, wood framing and interior woodwork, and brick masonry and historic graffiti on the walls of the barracks/courthouse/jail building reflecting all three periods of use.
- Much of the first fort's site has not been excavated and archeological material is presumed to be present. However, Fort Smith's archeological integrity is uneven and incomplete. In some areas, archeological investigations have yielded some information about Fort Smith, such as locating the original flagstaff base in the second fort parade ground, or portions of the second Fort's wall foundations. In other areas, the archeological record has been destroyed by twentieth-century development. The

archeological resources add to our understanding of Criterion 1 and are considered contributing resources to this criterion, but they do not appear to provide nationally significant archeological information to meet NHL Criterion 6.

Owner of Property: National Park Service

Acreage of Property: 37 acres

Origins of Nomination: The National Park Service contracted for the update to the NHL documentation and to confirm accurate and appropriate boundaries for the already designated National Historic Landmark.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- The updated documentation reflects additional nationally significant stories associated with this property that had not been previously told and a reconsideration of the earlier historical themes represented in the original Fort Smith nomination.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Carson moved, Dr. Murtagh seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 05/13/14):

The Honorable Sandy Sanders, Mayor of the City of Fort Smith, Arkansas
Frances McSwain, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, The Department of Arkansas Heritage, Little Rock, Arkansas

Advisory Board Recommendation: