

His Final Fort



Bent's New Fort
Santa Fe National Historic Trail

The Semmens Family
Santa Fe Trail Association
National Park Service

In 1859 William Bent once again found the military on his doorstep. This time the army was charged with defending emigrants and gold seekers.

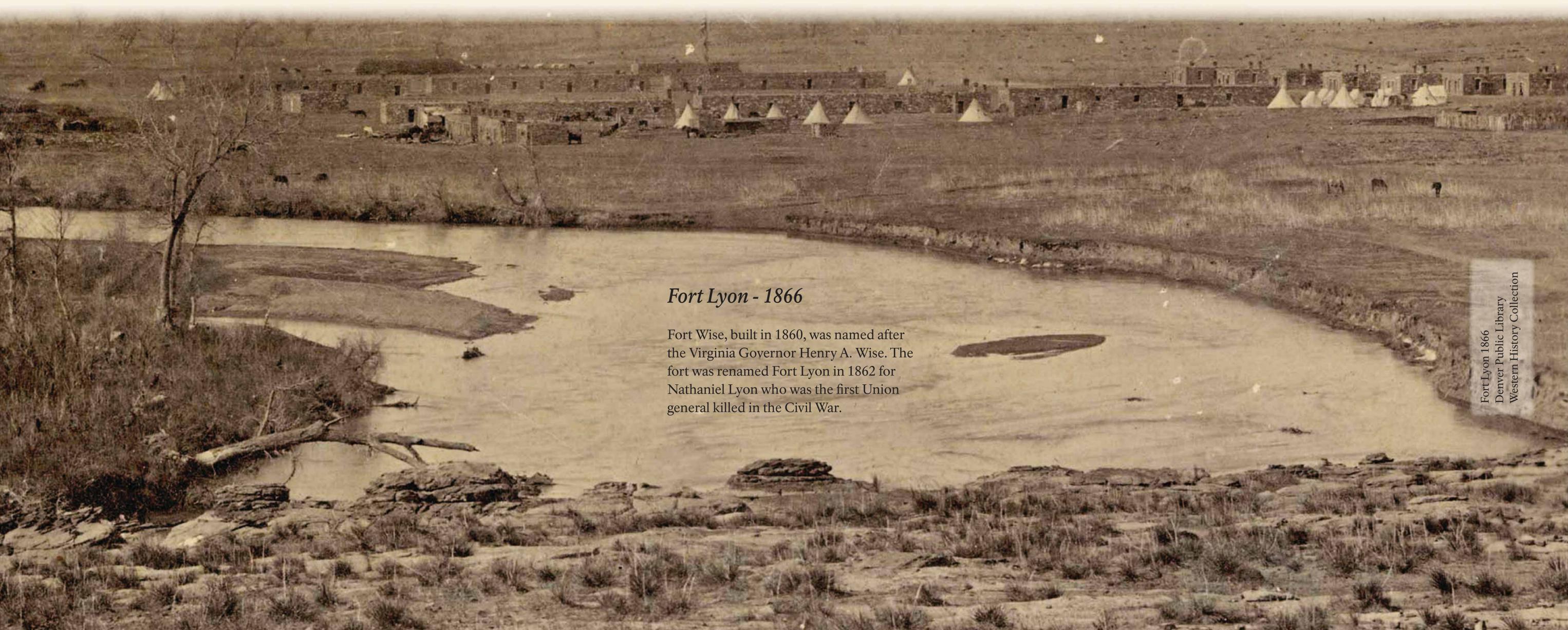
Tens of thousands of people came to Colorado seeking gold, then demanded protection along the Santa Fe Trail against thieves and the perceived threat of Indians who were defending their homelands. To the army it made sense to be positioned near Bent's

New Fort. The fort stood as a lookout above the Arkansas River and the landscape afforded plentiful water, forage, and timber.

Still stinging from the occupation of his first fort in 1846, Bent negotiated a lease with Major John Sedgwick for the army to use this fort as a quartermaster and commissary depot (1860). At the same time, just downhill from Bent's New Fort, the

army constructed a stone, timber, and adobe fort named Fort Wise (later known as Fort Lyon).

At Bent's New Fort, the army viewed Bent as a squatter and ignored his request for rental payments. Bent moved to his ranch 20 miles up the river where he continued to trade along the Santa Fe Trail. He argued with the army for the lease payments until his death in May 1869.



Fort Lyon - 1866

Fort Wise, built in 1860, was named after the Virginia Governor Henry A. Wise. The fort was renamed Fort Lyon in 1862 for Nathaniel Lyon who was the first Union general killed in the Civil War.

Fort Lyon 1866
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