

A brief history of Fort Reno

The fort was named for Major General Jesse Lee Reno, who was killed at the battle of South Mountain, Maryland on September 14, 1868. He was one of the most promising Civil War generals. Many historians believe he would have risen to the post assumed by General U.S. Grant had he lived.

The site for Fort Reno was selected in 1869 and used as a camp until construction began in 1876. Its primary purpose was for the protection of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Agency at Darlington, OK and shelter for those traveling the Old Chisholm Trail. In its early years there were many skirmishes and battles with the Indians.

The fort witnessed the 1889 Oklahoma Land Run at the 98th meridian located in El Reno. Ft. Reno troops stood guard along the line and fired guns at noon changing the prairie forever.

Fort Reno has been visited by a number of interesting people. General Sheridan and his scout Ben Clark. Post Surgeon Dr. Gorgas who solved the yellow fever problem in the Panama Canal Zone. George C. Marshall of the 3rd Battalion 19th Infantry. Major Gay who was General Patton's Chief of Staff during WWII. Frederic Remington painted many of his famous indian works in the area. Will Rogers, Wiley Post and Amelia Earhart enjoyed the horse races and polo matches in the 1930's.

During WW II the fort was very active. Over 3,000 men were trained with horses and mules before being dispatched to combat. A POW camp was established to contain Italian and German soldiers. Many of the Germans were from Rommel's Africa Corps. It was during this period Reno Chapel was constructed by the POW's.

The fort was officially abandoned and turned over to the Department of Agriculture in the 1940's ending its history as "The Protector of the Plains". Its next contribution to history was the riderless horse in President Kennedy's funeral procession was born at Ft. Reno as part of the Quartermaster Remount Station's breeding program .