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## Article Title: Fort Robinson During the 1880's: An Omaha Newspaperman Visits the Post

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Article Summary: William Edwards Annin's 1883 articles for the *Omaha Bee*, reproduced here, describe the layout of Fort Robinson and daily life on the post. They reveal the importance of the western outpost during the peaceful period that followed the Indian Wars. A third article, published just before Annin's arrival, comments on a gala ball at Fort Robinson.

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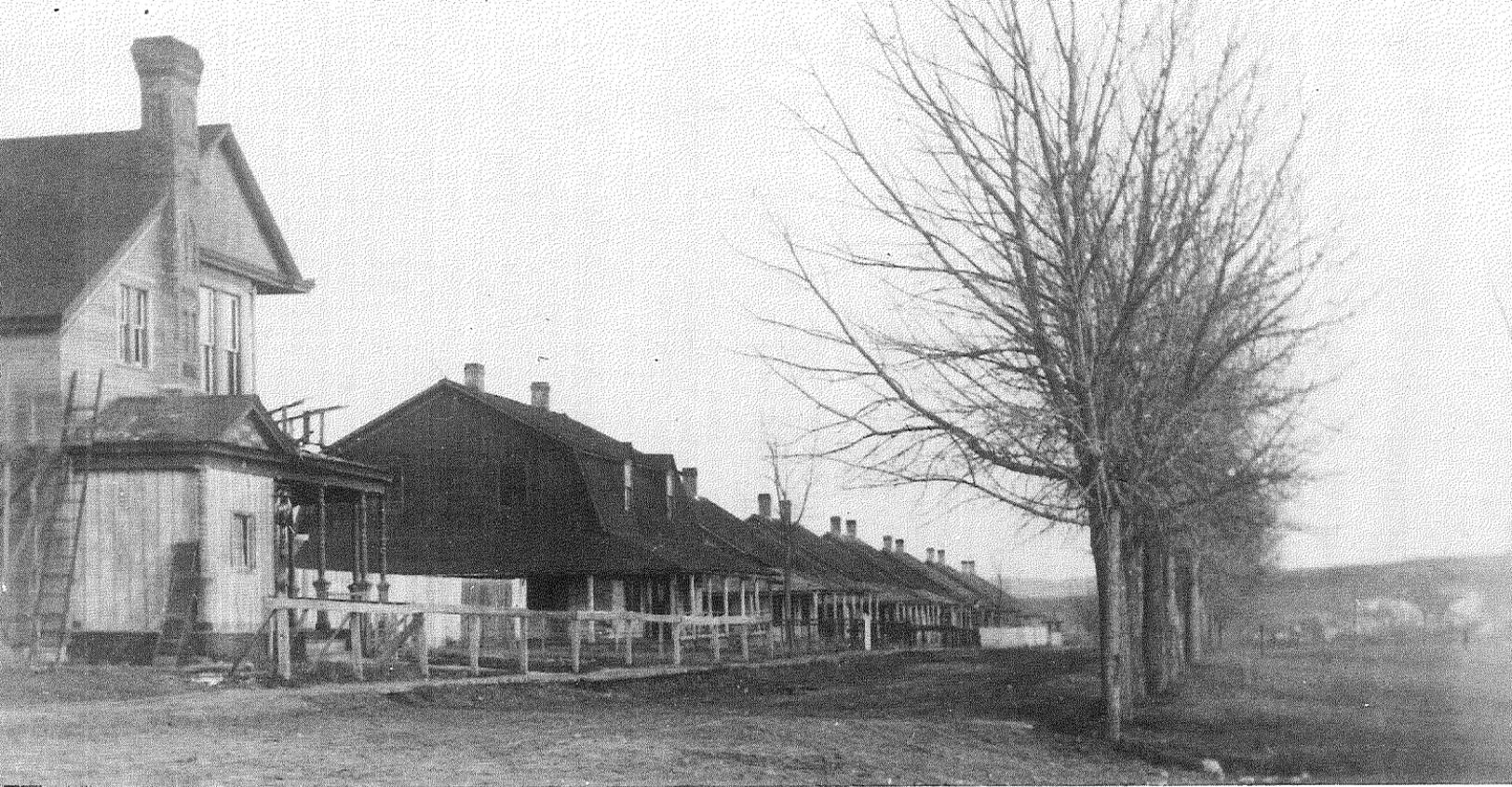
Names: William Edwards Annin, General John D Smith, Colonel Louis Henry Carpenter, Colonel Edwin V Sumner Jr, "Wild Hog," Major J W Paddock, Surgeon Henry McElderry, Paymaster Albert S Tower (Towar)

Nebraska Place Names: Fort Robinson

Fort Robinson Troops: Troop H, Fifth Cavalry (Captain John Morrison Hamilton); Company M, Fifth Cavalry (Captain John B Babcock); Company C, Fifth Cavalry (Captain John Scott Payne); Company C, Fourth Infantry (Captain Edwin Mortimer Coates)

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Photographs / Images: Officers' Line, 1874-1887; old Fort Robinson parade ground; smoldering ruins of the Cavalry Barracks; 1887-type adobe officers' duplex; a lady and her escort on horseback on Christmas Day, 1896; Indian tipis; Major and Mrs Joseph Williamson Paddock in their buggy, 1883; parlor in officers' quarters, 1890's; officers wives being entertained by Myra Walters Moyer, c. 1895



*Officers' Line, 1874-1887—The post commander's residence at the immediate left dates from 1884, while the former post commander's quarters and officers' duplexes to the right were constructed in 1874-1875. (Colonel Adna C. Hamilton Collection.)*

**FORT ROBINSON DURING THE 1880'S:  
AN OMAHA NEWSPAPERMAN VISITS THE POST**

*Edited by* VANCE E. NELSON  
Curator, Fort Robinson, Nebraska

INTRODUCTION

From the moment the Sioux Expedition<sup>1</sup> began its march to the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Indian Agencies in the spring of 1874 until the end of the tragic Cheyenne Outbreak in 1879, events at and near Fort Robinson, Nebraska,<sup>2</sup> captured headline after headline in the nation's newspapers. Accounts of the campaigns and tragedies of the Indian Wars against the Teton-Dakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes provided hundreds of news stories for correspondents.

Following the Cheyenne Outbreak, correspondents found themselves with no war to chronicle, and Fort Robinson news reports became less sanguine. The decade of the 1880's was a period of homesteading, town development, and railroad building in western Nebraska. Although Fort Robinson served the vital function of rendering aid, protection, and some semblance of law and order for the settlers, life at the outpost was more routine and less "newsworthy" than it was during the Indian Wars of the 1870's.

Coverage of the Plains—and even the mountain West—by reporters from competing Omaha newspapers was good. Edward Rosewater's Republican *Bee* and rival George L. Miller's Democratic *Herald* both sent newsmen to the fort. William Edwards Annin,<sup>3</sup> *Bee* editorial correspondent, was at one time his paper's chief representative in western Nebraska. Two of his

articles, which follow, provide rare insight into the importance of Fort Robinson. They were written in 1883 before the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley and the Burlington Railroads pushed into the area and before either Crawford or Chadron had yet been established:<sup>4</sup>

## CORRESPONDENCE OF THE *OMAHA BEE*

### A FRONTIER POST.

The Location, Surroundings and General Characteristics of Fort Robinson.

Fort Robinson, Neb., September 7th, 1883.—Frontier posts are much alike in their general characteristics. The inevitable line of officer's quarters fronts the parade ground which is enclosed by the company quarters backed by the stables and corral and flanked by the hospital and laundry row. But all frontier posts do not possess equal advantages of location with Fort Robinson. No post in the department of the Platte has a more charming natural situation. The stage road to Deadwood leaves the Fort two and a half miles to the west at Red Cloud station, a few rods from the old agency.<sup>5</sup> From the station a buck board runs in twice daily to the Fort carrying the mail and express matter from the north and south. We pass over two rises of ground before the first glimpses of the post become visible, when a turn in the road shows us a neat bird's-eye view of the garrison lying directly in our front, about a mile distant.

Fort Robinson was laid out by General John D. Smith,<sup>6</sup> in 1874, shortly before the outbreak of the Sioux troubles which culminated in the Rosebud campaign.<sup>7</sup> The situation selected was an excellent one from a military point of view. Located about 70 miles east of Ft. Laramie in the extreme northwestern corner of Nebraska, it forms one of the chain of posts which stretch along our Indian frontier, and hem in the great Sioux nation with a circle of bayonets, through which it will be difficult, if not impossible, to break. Fort Niobrara, which is

nearly 160 miles eastward, stands as a guard against the Spotted Tail Sioux at Rosebud agency and Fort Robinson is the military garrison nearest to Pine Ridge Agency with its 7,000 Indians. The three posts, Laramie, Robinson, and Pine Ridge,<sup>8</sup> therefore guard a line of frontier over 275 miles in extent along which 15,000 Indians rove within their reservations through a small portion of Northern Nebraska and a large portion of Southern Dakota.

From a picturesque standpoint the location of Robinson was no less fortunate. The post stands in the valley of the White River.<sup>9</sup> To the west and north the buttes rise to a height of from 300 to 500 feet above the plain, their sides cut and jagged into curious shapes by the influences of water and atmosphere and their rounded tops crested with the deep green of the mountain pine. A break in the hills to the northeast and southwest permits the passage of the river as it winds northward to its junction with the Missouri River. Except for this the garrison would be entirely surrounded by a circle of buttes in a plain of less than three miles square, carpeted with a luxuriant growth of grass and watered by numerous springs, which find their way through verdure-linked banks to the river.

We approach the post from the east, and after a ride of a half an hour from the stage station our team brings us to double row white tents, where Captain Payne's company of cavalry<sup>10</sup> are camping pending the construction of their new quarters. As we drive past the officers' row we are enabled to take in the entire post, which stretched in a regular quadrangle to the banks of Soldier's Creek below.

The officer's quarters are neat adobe buildings, with accommodations for two sets of quarters in each, a common doorway leading to a single hall. With the exception of the commanding officer's building they are all one story in height, with a steep pitched shingled roof, which projects sufficiently to afford shelter for a neat porch below. Including Col. Carpenter's<sup>11</sup> quarters which are comprised in two story hip roof structure at the extreme west end of the row, there are seven buildings in the line furnishing fair accommodation for a garrison of three companies. The arrival of Captain Payne's command has necessitated an addition to the present accommodations and in



*Old Fort Robinson Parade Ground—Top photo taken in the 1890's shows (front, from left) the 1874 Cavalry Barracks, 1874 Adjutant's Office, 1884 Guardhouse, and 1874 Guardhouse. In the bottom photo taken in March, 1898, may be seen the smoldering ruins of the Cavalry Barracks. At the right is the Adjutant's Office, restored in 1970 by the Nebraska State Historical Society; also restored is the 1874 Guardhouse. The 1874 and 1882 Infantry Barracks at the left are not in the top picture. (Colonel Adna C. Hamilton Collection.)*



the spring a new commanding officer's house will be built west of that now occupied by Col. Carpenter, while the building which he now uses will be reconverted into two sets of quarters, its original condition before changed into one dwelling by Col. Sumner<sup>12</sup> the late commander.

Between the commanding officer's residence and the post traders stands the administration building. This structure, for whose erection preparations were begun by Col. Sumner, has been built by Col. Carpenter since his arrival last May, and is just completed. It is a neat two story frame building, designed to accommodate the Post Adjutant, the Sergeant Major and the post library. A broad hall runs through the center. To the right as we enter, a door opens to the Adjutant's room which is neatly finished with black walnut grained wood work with hard finished walls, narrow pine flooring and a ten foot ceiling. It communicated directly in the rear with the Adjutant's clerks room where the records of the post are kept. Across the hall and taking in one half of the building down stairs is the post library of some seven hundred volumes. Upstairs are sleeping rooms for the Sergeant Major and a clerk. The administration building has been erected almost entirely by soldier labor. All the wood used in its construction came from the neighborhood. The logs were cut by soldiers in the canyons west of the fort, hauled in by government teams and sawed, planed, tongued, and grooved in the post saw mill. The garrison has every reason to be proud of the result which was obtained at an actual expenditure of about \$200 in money appropriation.

The men's quarters face the parade ground on the east, west, and south. They are 130 feet long and 30 feet deep, built of unsquared logs, each containing accommodations for one company. The quarters to the east are occupied by Troop H, Fifth Cavalry, John M. Hamilton<sup>13</sup> commanding. Captain Hamilton's troop has the distinction of being the recipient of special mention from the division inspector for their soldierly appearance and the neat condition of their quarters and stables. A long dining hall and kitchen runs along the rear of the sleeping apartment; a neat and well-stocked library and reading room is located at the north end of the building, while in the front the company orderly room is situated.

Directly opposite across the parade grounds are the quarters of Company M, Captain John B. Babcock<sup>14</sup> commanding. To a civilian eye there is little difference in appearance between the quarters of Company M, and those of Company H. The same neat sleeping room with its long line of beds and army chests, blankets rolled up at the head, and the floor and woodwork shining in their cleanliness is visible as one enters the door. Here too—a well lighted dining room and capacious kitchen, a carefully selected library and a well stocked reading room. Company M boasts of the best cellar in the garrison and of one of the most soldierly and popular company commanders in the department. The quarters occupied by Company C, 4th Infantry, Captain Edwin M. Coates<sup>15</sup> commanding, are located opposite to officers row on a line with the adjutant's office, the guard house, the commissary building and the hospital. They are the historic quarters of the garrison for here on January 10, 1879,<sup>16</sup> occurred the remarkable Indian outbreak of the Northern Cheyennes under "Wild Hog."<sup>17</sup>

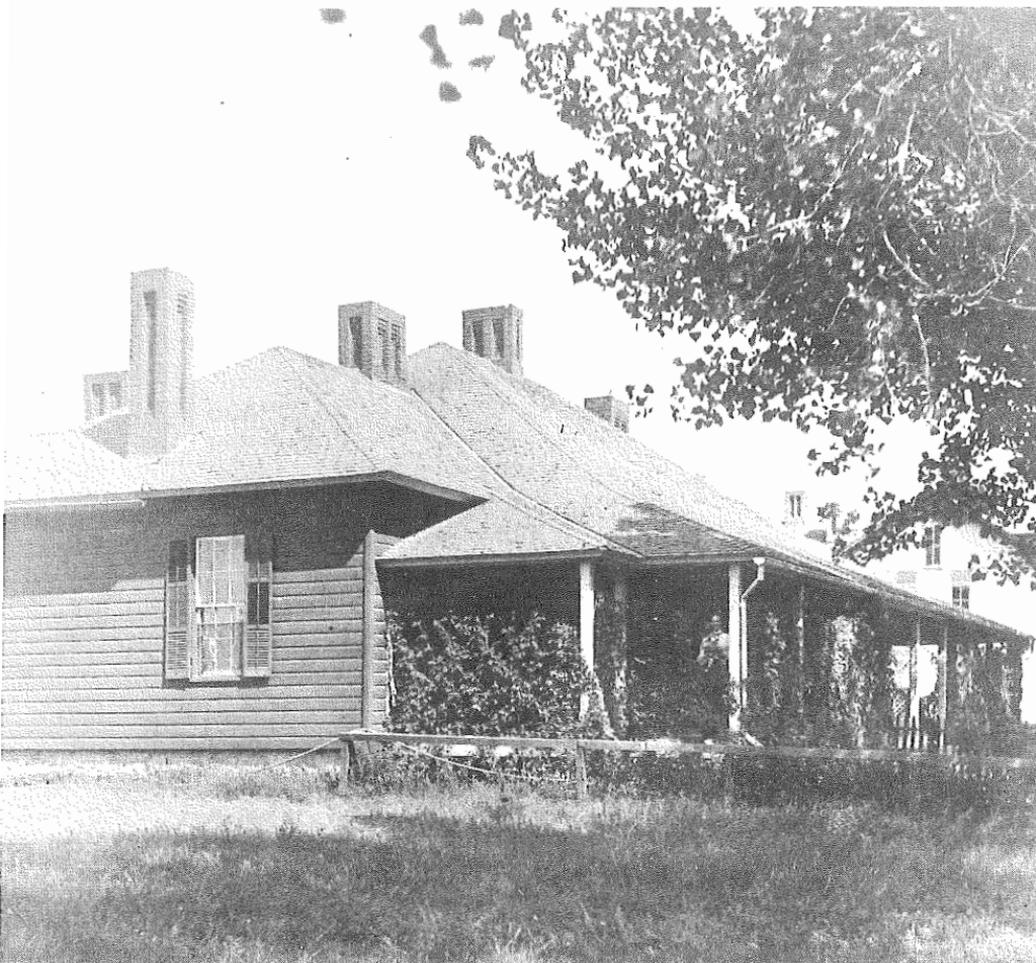
It will be remembered that in August, 1877, some eight hundred of the Northern Cheyennes were sent from Dakota to the Indian Territory. On September 9, 1878, eighty-nine bucks and two hundred and forty-four women and children escaped from Fort Reno and struck northward for Dakota, committing numerous depredations on their route and eluding all pursuit in Kansas and Nebraska until October 18th, when ten were taken near Red Cloud Agency. On October 23rd one hundred and forty-nine Cheyennes were captured near Fort Robinson, and two days later were removed to that post and placed in confinement awaiting the orders of the Indian department. Here they were held for more than two months, closely guarded, and daily becoming more sullen, until early in January they were informed that the Indian department had ordered their return to the Indian Territory. They refused almost to a man to consent to removal.

On January 9th, "Wild Hog," the ring leader was ironed after a struggle in which a soldier was stabbed, and the Indians began to barricade the quarters. To the surprise of all it was found that they had succeeded in concealing a large number of rifles and any attempt to enter the building would have been certain death. The following night at 10 o'clock occurred the desperate

and gallant attempt of the Cheyennes for liberty. Two of the sentinels were killed, and barricades were thrown down and a simultaneous rush was made from doors and windows towards the creek, the squaws covering the retreat of the bucks and dropping bravely in their places as the chiefs fled toward the water under a heavy fire from the guards.<sup>18</sup> Before the band could reach shelter thirty-two were killed and seventy-two recaptured. The remainder fled to the hills and entrenched themselves where in a series of engagements lasting until the 20th the entire band were either killed or recaptured.<sup>19</sup> The Indians fought with the greatest desperation to the last, refusing all terms of surrender. Scarcely a corporal's guard remained to be removed to Indian Territory. It is an interesting fact in this connection, that while I write, Captain Hamilton's company are now on the road between Sidney and Robinson, escorting the remnant of the Northern Cheyennes on their way from Indian Territory to their friends at Pine Ridge Agency. Among the number are a dozen or more who were in the memorable outbreak at Fort Robinson in 1879.<sup>20</sup>

Captain Coates' company is the only company of infantry at the post. It is much reduced in number, owing to the discharge of many of the men, but will be soon recruited to the standard. Last week the company gave a very enjoyable ball to Company M, of the Fifth Cavalry, of which I see that an account has already appeared in the Bee.<sup>21</sup> To the south of Captain Hamilton's company's quarters the new quarters for Company C, Fifth Cavalry, commanded by Captain Payne, are rising. These, when completed, will be the most substantial log quarters in the department. They are built throughout of sawed logs with the joints tightly filled with mortar, the roof shingled and light from both the east and west sides.

The quarters are to be 125 feet long and 25 feet wide, with an L for kitchen and dining room purposes 80 feet long. Upon their completion Captain Payne's company propose to give a grand opening ball which it is rumored will be the grandest affair of the kind ever witnessed at the garrison. The adjutant's office, guard house and prison, the commissary and quartermaster's buildings, two long frame structures painted red, two company stables to which a third is to be added, a half a dozen isolated log houses occupied by the married sergeants and



*This 1887-type adobe officers' duplex has been restored by the Nebraska State Historical Society. Clapboarding was placed over adobe in exposed areas. Photo dates from the 1890's. (Colonel Adna C. Hamilton Collection.)*

privates, a wheelwright and blacksmith shop, a corral, and a line of houses denominated laundry row, form with the hospital the remaining buildings of the garrison, which, it will be seen, is quite a large settlement in itself. I had almost omitted mention of the post trader's residence and establishment, which stands on a line with the officer's row next to the administration building, and comprises a log and frame residence with nine rooms, a large store, several warehouses and a corral. Major J. W. Paddock,<sup>22</sup> formerly of Omaha, is in charge, and his family have been spending the summer at Robinson and enjoying the bracing atmosphere and the pleasant society of the post. For the society is certainly delightful, even if somewhat restricted as to numbers.



*Equestrian activities were always one of the main pastimes at the cavalry post. Lady and escort were out riding when this picture was taken on Christmas Day in 1896. (Colonel Adna C. Hamilton Collection.)*

A garrison with fewer feuds, a more genial set of officers commanding a more orderly and soldierly lot of men, running with less official friction it would be difficult to find in any department. Of the garrison in detail, the machinery of a frontier post, the occupations and duties of the officers and the pleasures and trials of army life at an isolated post I propose to speak more in detail in another letter. I will only say in closing that the alleged lazy army officer of the soft service brigade is not stationed at Fort Robinson, and the military martinet of a commanding officer has not taken up his quarters in the building occupied by Major Louis H. Carpenter, the hospitable, soldierly and genial post commander.

W.[illiam] E.[Edwards] A.[nnin]

## A POST WELL PLANTED.

The Regulation Regularity of Life at Fort Robinson and Its  
Doby Palaces.

Fort Robinson, Nebr., September 8, 1883.—It is the gray of early morning and a quarter to five o'clock when the shrill notes of the bugle sounding reveille awaken me from my sound sleep and carry the information that the official day of the garrison has begun. The men are quickly up and the officers shortly emerge from the quarters to receive the reports of their companies and then to wend their way to the stables where the cavalry horses are receiving their grooming. This is an early rise, gentlemen, but it is one of the pleasures which every lieutenant and many captains in the garrison service enjoy seven days in the week and three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. There are three companies of the Fifth Cavalry stationed at this post and one company of infantry. The cavalry has its advantages but it also possesses counterbalancing disadvantages. The first of these is the frequent campaign service which it is called upon to perform. The brunt of the work in Indian campaigning must be borne by mounted commands, though the infantry has done good service both in the field and in manning the garrison.

None of our cavalry regiments has a better record than the Fifth which, since the war, has been engaged, with scarcely an exception, in every important Indian war in the west. It was in the Colorado and Nebraska Indian war in 1867 and 1868, with Crook in his Apache campaign in Arizona in '70 and '71; it took part in the Kansas troubles of '75 and did gallant service in the Sioux campaign of '76 and '77. Since that time the regiment has been busy with frequent summer scoutings and the total months of the garrison life of its officer's and men within the past ten years would seem surprisingly small if stated. I mention these facts to show that even in time of peace, so called, our little army on the frontier has found ample employment for its energies and the "softness" of the service has been proportioned only to the gaps between campaigns which have been spent in building and repairing posts, making roads, constructing telegraph lines and taking such rests as frequent transfers from one

garrison to another would permit. For even when relieved from the weary marches and dangers of the campaign there is employment enough for our soldiers on the frontier. At present at Robinson the men are busy building log barracks and when this work, made necessary by the lack of funds to pay for civilian labor, is concluded, a set of stables remains to be constructed.

Under Col. Sumner several new buildings were erected, water works constructed, a ditch more than a mile in length was built, and trees without number most of which are dead were planted, all by the labor of enlisted men who were sworn into the service as soldiers but found that the world [sic work] on the frontier comprised a combination of duties for which they had not bargained, and about which the recruiting officer maintained a studied silence. The fault for this state of affairs rests neither upon the officers of the staff or line, and no one feels more strongly the injustice it works to the soldier than many of our post commanders. But posts must be built and kept in repair, and communication between garrison and headquarters must be maintained and where funds are lacking to buy labor the best available unpaid laborers have to be employed. Army officers generally agree that a large percentage of desertions arise from the disgust of enlisted men for the menial duties which they are often called upon to perform.

At nine o'clock the bugles play a lively tune for guard mount.<sup>2 3</sup> It is surprising what a variety of music can be evoked from this simple instrument, but it does not take the place of a full brass band, and this leads me to comment on the injustice of retaining the bands in the army at regimental headquarters. Under the old organization of the army, as I understand it, the bands were entirely supported from the army appropriation, the expenses for instruments, music, etc., being borne by the government. As at present constituted, musicians are enlisted as soldiers, and the band expenses are met by contributions from the officers and men of every company in the regiment. Such being the case it seems manifest that the various posts should receive some benefit from their contributions and that all the results should not accrue to the companies stationed at regimental headquarters.



*Indian tipis at Fort Robinson near the site of the former Red Cloud Agency in March, 1898. The log building in the background is believed to have been owned by Army scout Baptiste (Little Bat) Garnier. (Colonel Adna C. Hamilton Collection.)*

General Howard<sup>24</sup> very sensibly recently sent the Fourth infantry band to Fort Niobrara for a two week's detail and if the example were followed with respect to other posts and regiments in the department it would be greatly appreciated. Of course the great objection is the old regulations stationing the band at regimental headquarters and the added one that no appropriation is available for purposes of transportation, but both of these could be removed by proper legislation. The effort at least would be greatly appreciated at some of our frontier posts which feel keenly the deprivation of the music for which they pay and to a participation in whose enjoyment they are justly entitled.

During the morning, target practice is going on in the range to the rear of the garrison, three squads of recruits are drilling in front of the quarters the train of teams hauling logs to the saw mill for the new barracks passes slowly across the level between the garrison and the buttes to the south and the sound of hammer and saw comes from across the parade ground where Captain Payne's company are at work as carpenters on their quarters. There seems to be no lack of work military and otherwise when, to cap the climax, word is brought that the telegraph line is down somewhere between Robinson and Hat Creek, and a detail of soldiers is sent out to mend and repair the break in order that the post may be placed in communication with headquarters at Omaha.

The telegraph line to Robinson as at present conducted is a malignant nuisance. It is a branch of Cheyenne and Black Hills line and runs from Hat Creek to the post, a distance of sixty miles. It is owned by private parties who throw the labor of its maintenance on the government and remain sweetly oblivious whether it is up or down as long as they receive their monthly compensation for its use. From Robinson to Pine Ridge Agency, sixty-three miles away, the government owns a wire and there is also a wire between Pine Ridge and the Rosebud Agency and between that Agency and Fort Niobrara. The construction of a line filling in the gap of twenty-eight miles between Niobrara and Rosebud would give the government a telegraph of their own from Robinson to Pine Ridge, Rosebud and Niobrara with direct communication with Omaha. This is greatly needed.

Getting a dispatch to and from Robinson is as uncertain as an Ohio majority in an October election, and the old line has been patched and repaired so often that it is likely to fall down any hour out of sheer weakness. An attempt will be made at the next congress to secure a special appropriation for the building of the portion of line mentioned, and the clause in the signal estimates, which bears on this point, should receive the favoring influence and votes of the entire Nebraska delegation.<sup>25</sup>

As this letter is made up chiefly of digressions, I might as well wander to the quartermaster's building and note the necessity of quartermaster sergeants in army garrisons. There is a commissary sergeant at every post to keep track of the commissary stores and fill up the blanks, make reports, and, in general, to perform the duties of grocery store clerk and bookkeeper for this important department. There is also an ordinance sergeant in charge of the guns, field pieces and ammunition. But neither of these departments have a tithe of the troublesome details that are connected with the quartermaster's. There the supplies for the garrison, except the ones above mentioned, must be accounted for, and the receipt, issued and expenditure of every article is hedged around by a wall of writing paper and red tape which is awful to contemplate. Gallons of ink are shed in official correspondence relating to the whereabouts of a truant water bucket or an erring hand saw, the condemnation of a load of hay or the short measure of a bolt of blue flannel for all of which some lieutenant detailed to act as quartermaster is responsible.

While quartermasters on the staff or at depots have an army of clerks to keep their papers straight, the post quartermaster must do the best he can with only such assistance as he can find among the enlisted men. In consequence, with the most studied attention to the duties of the position, mistakes and entanglements ensue and each change of officers is likely to be followed by the retiring quartermaster putting his hand into his pocket and re-imbursing the government for the loss of some trifling article of post furniture which has strayed from his official vision, or for which he has been wrongfully made accountable through the blunders of an incompetent extemporized clerk. The appointment of sergeants for the quartermasters department would work as favorably as the system of commissary and



*“Major” (actually the post sutler) and Mrs. Joseph Williamson Paddock traveling by buggy from Fort Robinson to Fort Sidney in 1883. The major recorded the near horse as being Pater, 20 years old, and the dog as Dot.*

ordnance sergeants, and Congress must sooner or later be made to see the question in the proper light, which is that of a true and rational economy.

One of the bright sides of a soldier's life is the care which is taken of the sick. The post hospital at Robinson is a convenient, well lighted and well ventilated two story frame structure under the charge of Surgeon Henry McElderry.<sup>26</sup> It comprises an office and library, a neat and well stocked apothecary shop, where Hospital Steward Bergold has his headquarters, two sleeping rooms, store rooms and a cheerfully sunny ward with every convenience for the care of those on the sick list. The iron cots insulated from jars on rubber castors and covered with spotless linen, the cleanly floors and shining woodwork, the curtained windows and lockers filled with appliances for the relief of the suffering, bespeak a considerate attention for the needs of the invalids and a knowledge of the advances in medical and sanitary science. An unexpended appropriation of \$1,800 is available for enlarging the hospital and making some needed improvements, which Dr. McElderry proposes to dispose of to advantage before the close of the fiscal year.<sup>27</sup>

The ceremony of post inspection took place several days ago, and included the muster of troops for pay. It was a pretty sight to witness the entire command drawn up on line on the parade ground in full dress, the yellow-plumed helmets of the cavalry relieving the more sombre and solid front of Captain Coates' little company of infantry, and every rifle and carbine glistened in its scrupulous polish.

Inspection includes an examination of the arms and accoutrements of each soldier by the commanding officer, who passes down the line accompanied by his staff, and notes the individual appearance of the men; and a tour of each of the quarters, an examination of the bakery, the hospital, the ordance, commissary and the quartermaster buildings. As the men are drawn up in companies the muster rolls are read by the company commander and the name of each soldier called. In this manner the commanding officer is enabled to verify the rolls on which the men draw their pay and certify to their correctness. Two days later the arrival of Paymaster Tower,<sup>28</sup> accompanied by his clerk, Mr. A. H. Butler,<sup>29</sup> occasions the usual flurry in the quarters. Pay day comes once in two months in the army and the coming of the paymaster is naturally looked forward to with anxious expectation.

"Paying off" took place in the orderly room of Captain Hamilton's quarters and from 10 o'clock until nearly noon the companies filed in man by man, while their names and the amounts due were read off by the clerk, certified to on duplicated rolls by the company commander and the cash handed over with mathematical precision and great rapidity by the paymaster. That the days following pay day at Robinson were marked by the usual quiet and decorum is to the credit of an unusually fine and orderly garrison.<sup>30</sup> We have witnessed pay days at other posts which were followed by a not to be wondered at license and full guard house. If the soldiers were paid off weekly or monthly, as they would be, through the quartermasters, the morals of the army would be greatly improved and discipline at our posts could be maintained with less strain.

A tour down officers row when tattoo<sup>31</sup> has ceased and the soldiers are preparing for taps and their night's rest finds in the

summer evening the officers generally congregated on the porches fronting their quarters. Captains Hamilton and Coates, two of the oldest captains in the service, Captain Babcock and J. Scott Payne, Lieutenants Michler<sup>32</sup> and Webster,<sup>33</sup> Post Adjutant Henry Goldman<sup>34</sup> and Lieutenant L. W. Cornish<sup>35</sup> form, with Major Carpenter, the officers stationed at this post, to each and all of whom I am under personal obligations for many expressions of kindly hospitality. Starting today on my return to Omaha, I leave behind me nothing but the most pleasant recollections of my visit to this frontier post, with its charming location, its picturesque surrounding, and its genial commanding officer and garrison.

W. E. A.

### ALL HANDS 'ROUND.

#### A Merry Night at Fort Robinson.

*[The following account of "night life" at the post was published in the Bee before Annin arrived at Fort Robinson. The fact that Annin refers to this article when first describing Fort Robinson indicates that gala event must have had an effect on the social life at Fort Robinson which lasted for several days. There were frequent "hops" at Fort Robinson, but until this account was located, information regarding the dances and parties was meager.]*

Fort Robinson, Nebr., September 1, 1883.—A pleasing break in the monotony of garrison life in the quarters was the ball given here last evening by members of Co. C, Fourth Infantry to Co. M, Fifth Infantry, which is generally conceded to have been one of the most successful and satisfactory events of the kind which has ever taken place at Fort Robinson. Last October when Captain Coate's company arrived at this post after a weary march from Sidney, 130 miles distant, they found a smoking hot supper and a genial welcome from company M, which was gratefully appreciated and warmly remembered by the men. A combination of circumstances have prevented Company C. from earlier reciprocating the attention then

shown them, but for several weeks past preparations have been in progress for a return of hospitalities which culminated last night in a soldier's ball that would have done credit to many a large town in our state, where greater conveniences are available than can be found at any frontier post.

Invitations were extended to all the companies present and to the officers and their families. The dancing hall, a rough slab structure with canvas roof, which stands in the rear of company M's quarters, was nicely decorated with flags, while two wall tents in the rear furnished accommodations for dressing rooms and the preparation of lemonade. Shortly after tattoo the company began to assemble, and by taps the orchestra had struck up the opening march and the floor was well filled with dancers. The capacity of Fort Robinson in turning out lady partners, was well tested. The wives and daughters of several sergeants, [*sic*] the servants . . . and a large contingent from laundry row, made the gathering anything but the stag party that might have been expected. At the upper end of the hall, Col. Carpenter and his officers with their wives were interested spectators, and enjoyed thoroughly the merry scene. The uniforms of the men, the yellow trimmings of the cavalry companies mingling with the navy blue of the infantry, the colors of the ladies' dresses, many of which were very neat and tasty, the evident abandon and satisfaction with which all entered into the spirit of the hour, made the occasion one that will be long remembered by those who took part. Supper was spread in the dining room of Company C's quarters. Two long tables extended down the length of the room, with accommodations for 100 guests. Much taste was displayed in the decoration of the supper room, and the bill of fare was quite elaborate, while the supper was universally pronounced to be satisfactory in every respect. Dancing was continued, by permission of the commanding [*sic*] officer, until early in the morning, and the guests departed with many congratulations to Co. C. over the success of the entertainment and to their energetic committee, which consisted of First Sergeant Rice, Sergeant Uhls, Corporal Smith, and Private Lehman. Fort Robinson has one of the most orderly and intelligent garrisons in the department, and the commanding officer expresses himself as more than pleased with the soldiers over which he is placed in command.



*The parlor in officers' quarters in the 1890's of Kate C. Hamilton (inset), wife of Lt. George F. Hamilton of the 9th Cavalry. (Colonel Adna C. Hamilton Collection.) . . . Below, officers' wives are entertained in Crawford about 1895 by Myra Walters Moyer (left, standing), wife of druggist Augustus Moyer.*



## NOTES

1. "The Sioux Expedition got underway when eight infantry and four cavalry companies marched from Fort D. A. Russell, Wyoming Territory, to Fort Laramie. . . . At Fort Laramie four more companies of cavalry were added to the expedition." Roger T. Grange, "Fort Robinson, Outpost on the Plains," *Nebraska History*, 39 (September, 1958), 196-200.

2. "On March 29, 1874, Camp Red Cloud Agency was changed to Camp Robinson in honor of Lieutenant Levi H. Robinson, who had been killed . . . the previous month," *Ibid.*, 199.

3. "William Edwards Annin, a brilliant young writer just out of Princeton University, proud of his descent from the Jonathan Edwards family, quick of perception and sharp at repartee, nervous, excitable, energetic, socially ambitious, entered the newspaper family as associate editor and was soon dashing off editorials that could not be distinguished from Rosewater's own." Victor Rosewater, "The Life and Times of Edward Rosewater," typed and bound manuscript, Nebraska State Historical Society Library, 96.

4. W. E. Annin, "A Frontier Post," *Omaha Weekly Bee*, September 19, 1883, 7; "A Post Well Planted," *Omaha Weekly Bee*, September 26, 1883, 6.

5. The stage road Annin refers to was known as the Sidney-Deadwood Trail, originally established as a supply route to the Red Cloud Agency and later extended to the gold fields of the Black Hills. Annin writes "Old Agency" because the Red Cloud Agency was moved to Pine Ridge, South Dakota, in 1877. N. R. Manken, "The Sidney-Black Hills Trail," *Nebraska History*, 30 (September, 1949), 203-225; Grange, 216-217.

6. Colonel John E. Smith (not John D.), 14th Infantry, in 1874 commanded the Sioux Expedition which established Camp Robinson. F. B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, 1789-1903* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 900.

7. Annin refers to the campaign of 1876 against the Teton-Dakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho Indians. An officer from Fort Robinson, Captain Guy V. Henry, was wounded in the battle at Rosebud Creek, June 17, 1876. An account of the entire campaign is found in J. F. Finerty, *Warpath and Bivouac*, M. M. Quaife, ed. (Lincoln: Bison Books, University of Nebraska Press, 1966).

8. A possible error of a *Bee* typesetter; this should read "Fort Niobrara."

9. Altitude of the White River here is 3,764 feet above the sea. Captain William S. Stanton, *Exploration and Surveys in the Department of the Platte*, Appendix RR of the Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1878 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1878), 1741.

10. John Scott Payne was promoted to captain of the 5th Cavalry in June, 1875. Heitman, 777.

11. "In compliance with S. O. 44 Dept. of the Platte, April 30, 1883, the undersigned hereby assumes command of this post. Louis Henry Carpenter, Major 5th Cavalry." Fort Robinson, Nebraska, Selected Post Orders 1874-97, NARS RG 98, May 7, 1883, Order 54; Carpenter was a Medal of Honor recipient. Heitman, 284.

12. In accordance with Special Order 29, Headquarters, Department of the Platte, March 15, 1883, Colonel Edwin V. Sumner, Jr., relinquished command at Fort Robinson. Post Orders, March 23, 1883; Sumner had been with the 5th Cavalry

since March, 1879. Heitman, 936.

13. Captain John Morrison Hamilton was assigned to the 5th Cavalry in December, 1870. Heitman, 493.

14. Captain John Breckinridge Babcock was assigned to the 5th Cavalry, in May, 1877. Babcock was awarded the Medal of Honor March 2, 1899, for gallantry in action at Spring Creek, Nebraska, May 16, 1869: "This officer then a 1st lieutenant 5th U.S. cavalry and serving with a scouting column while in advance with a troop of cavalry was attacked by Indians outnumbering his force six times; advancing to high ground he dismounted his troop, himself remaining mounted to encourage his men, and there fought the Indians until relieved, his horse being wounded." Heitman, 178.

15. Captain Edwin Mortimer Coates was assigned to the 4th Infantry in March, 1869. Heitman, 312.

16. This date should be January 9, 1879. Special File, Military Division of the Missouri, Board of Officers Proceedings January 25, 1879, *Inquiry into Cheyenne Outbreak*, January 9-22, 1879. NARS RG 98. (Hereafter designated Special File, 1879.)

17. Dull Knife was regarded as the leader of the imprisoned group of Northern Cheyenne. However, Wild Hog exercised a great deal of influence over the younger warriors and was hostile about returning to Indian Territory. When Wild Hog was taken from the barracks to the guardhouse, the Indians remaining in the barracks began to prepare for the outbreak. Special File, 1879.

18. An eyewitness, Edgar Beecher Bronson, gives a different account. He states that the warriors attempted to hold off the troops and allow women and children to make their escape first. See E. B. Bronson, *Reminiscences of a Ranchman* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962).

19. The date of the final battle was January 22, 1879. The Indian position was on the north bank of a small creek several miles north of Harrison, Nebraska. Special File, 1879.

20. "Captain J. M. Hamilton, 5th Cavalry, will proceed with the available men of his troop tomorrow the 16th instant, to Fort Sidney, Neb., there to receive and conduct to the Pine Ridge Agency via Fort Robinson, Neb., the Cheyenne Indians now enroute from the Indian Territory. The command will be supplied with five (5) days' rations. . . . The Q. M. Dept. will furnish three (3) wagons as transportation. Upon completion of this duty the troop will return to its proper station." Post Order 105, August 15, 1883.

21. "All Hands 'Round," *Omaha Daily Bee*, September 6, 1883.

22. Joseph Williamson Paddock became a captain of the 1st Nebraska Infantry July 22, 1861. On May 26, 1863, Paddock became a major (assistant adjutant-general, volunteers) in July, 1863. Paddock died Jan. 20, 1895. Heitman, 764.

23. Guard mount was an impressive ceremony and the most important detail of the day. The troops were assembled and inspected daily and the neatest and smartest soldier selected for the commanding officer's orderly. The guard was formed and inspected by officers of the day, who then relieved the men forming the previous day's guard.

24. Brevet Major General Oliver O. Howard, commanded the Department of the Platte. J. M. Wolfe, *Omaha City Directory, 1883-84* (Omaha: Herald Printing, Binding and Electrotyping Establishment, 1883), 58.

25. On November 17, 1884, Captain E. M. Coates, all available men of Company

C, 4th Infantry, and 12 privates of the cavalry were ordered to "supervise and construct the section of telegraph line to be built between this post and Fort Laramie." The section was "36 miles and a fraction,  $\frac{1}{2}$  the entire distance." Post Order 104, November 17, 1884.

26. Captain Henry McElderry, assistant surgeon, arrived at Fort Robinson November 18, 1882. He served at Fort Robinson until Surgeon Walter Reed arrived in August, 1884. Post Orders; Surgeon McElderry, who returned to Fort Robinson for duty during the 1890's, died April 17, 1898. Heitman, 664.

27. "A Board of Survey is hereby ordered to convene at this post at 10 a.m. on the 14th instant or as soon thereafter as practicable for the purpose of investigating, reporting upon, and fixing the responsibility for the loss of certain medical property and hospital property at the destruction by fire of the Post Hospital September 22, 1883." Post Order 181, December 13, 1883; The new Post Hospital was ready for inspection July 14, 1885. Post Order 107, July, 1885.

28. Major Albert S. Towar, paymaster. *Official Army Register* (Washington: Secretary of War, AGO, January 1, 1882), 34; Post Order 117, September 5, 1883.

29. A. Wilson Butler, clerk, Pay Department, U.S. Army. Wolfe, 105.

30. Despite Annin's opinion, post records show many garrison courts-martial during this period for offenses such as drunkenness or desertion.

31. Tattoo is the call to quarters sounded shortly before taps.

32. 1st Lieutenant Francis Mishler, 5th Cavalry. Heitman, 708; Post Order 99, August 7, 1883.

33. 1st Lieutenant George Ogilvie Webster, 4th Infantry. Heitman, 1013.

34. 2nd Lieutenant Henry Joseph Goldman, 5th Cavalry. Heitman, 462; Post Order, June 2, 1881. 72.

35. 2nd Lieutenant Lester Warren Cornish, 5th Cavalry, Heitman, 328.