

Fort Wicked

Located on US-6 south of Merino, 1/2 mile north of the Washington/Logan County line.

In the summer of 1820 Long's Expedition, named after James Long, traveled up the South Platte River, and a score or so years later Fremont followed in Long's footsteps. In the 1860s this was the route of the overland stages passing back and forth between Omaha and Denver. The intrepid and resourceful frontiersman, Hollen Godfrey, kept one of the stage stations on the line along the Platte. It was located near Merino. Godfrey was always on the alert, and the Indians never caught him napping. They once swooped down upon his ranch, and a hot encounter ensued. A dozen or more of the warriors were killed or wounded before they were beaten off. After this clash, the savages named Godfrey's station "Fort Wicked." In the days of Indian fighting this was the only house on the stage line in Colorado that was not burned. Up until 1869 travel was dangerous on the plains, and immigration to Colorado was checked. Mail coaches were ambushed and fired upon. Some large caravans were attacked. As a result, the Territory's growth was almost at a standstill before 1870.



Courtesy Ben Godfrey, great grandson of the Godfreys
Holon and Matilda Godfrey's vigorous defense earned their trading post the name of FORT WICKED.

References
<http://www.cogenweb.com/logan/index.htm>
<http://www.legendsofamerica.com/co-forts3.html>
<http://www.strangeusa.com/Viewlocation.aspx?id=1837>
<http://sandcreeksite.com/>

Battle of Beecher Island



Early morning of Sept. 17, 1868, a large band of Cheyenne and Sioux stage a surprise attack on Major George A. Forsyth and a volunteer force of 50 frontiersmen south of Wray.

Retreating to a small sandbar in the Arikaree River that thereafter became known as Beecher's Island, Forsyth and his men succeeded in repulsing three massed Indian charges. Thanks to the rapid fire capability of their seven-shot Spencer rifles, Forsyth's volunteers were able to kill or wound many of the Indian attackers, including the war chief Roman Nose. But as evening came and the fighting temporarily halted, Forsyth found he had 22 men either dead or wounded, and he estimated the survivors were surrounded by a force of 600 Indians. Facing certain annihilation unless they could somehow bring help, two men-Jack Stilwell and Pierre Trudeau-volunteered to attempt a daring escape through the Indian lines and silently melted into the night.

The battle raged for five more days. Forsyth's fighting force was reduced to ten men before the Indians finally withdrew, leaving the small force miles from help and lacking wagons and horses. On Sept. 25, the 10th Cavalry-one of the Army's two African-American units nicknamed the "Buffalo Soldiers"-came riding to their rescue with a field ambulance and medical supplies. Miraculously, Stilwell and Trudeau had managed to make it through the Sioux and Cheyenne and bring help.

Historical Sites in Eastern Colorado



Battle of Summit Springs

Fort Sedgwick

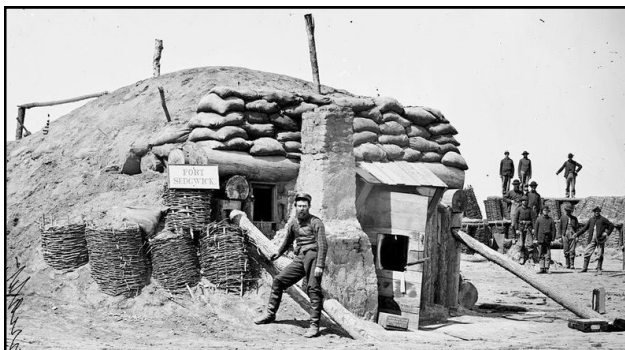
Fort Wicked

Sand Creek Massacre

Battle of Beecher Island

Published by Tourist Information Center, Sterling, Colo.

Fort Sedgwick



No buildings remain on this historic site north of the South Platte River Trail Scenic and Historic Byway. A flag pole marks the fort's location. The fictional movie "Dances with Wolves" propelled the name "Fort Sedgwick" into the national spotlight.

Located near Julesburg #1, the post was established in 1864 to protect the Transcontinental Telegraph and travelers on the Overland Route from hostile Indians. Originally called Camp Rankin, in late 1865, the post was renamed Fort Sedgwick in honor of Major General John Sedgwick, a fallen Civil War hero. At its height, nearly 1,000 soldiers were assigned to the fort but the usual troop strength was about 200. By all accounts the post was not a pleasant place to be stationed. In the words of local author, Dallas Williams, "... the quarters, if any, were considered unlivable, the food was terrible, pleasures were few and the nearest bath was the South Platte River."

By 1871, hostile Indians no longer posed a threat to northeastern Colorado. Fort Sedgwick had fulfilled its purpose and in May that year it was officially abandoned. Most of the structures were dismantled and shipped to Sidney Barracks in Nebraska and the Military Reservation was opened for settlement.

The original flagpole from Fort Sedgwick was moved to Julesburg and is now in front of the Julesburg Library.

Sand Creek Massacre

By 1864, a combination of cultural demands on the Plains environment and natural factors caused food and fuel to become increasingly scarce. Traditional camp-sites used by the Cheyenne and Arapaho along rivers and streams were unable to support winter encampments. In the fall of 1864, Black Kettle, White Antelope and other Cheyenne Chiefs established a winter campsite near the south bend of Big Sandy Creek, southwest of Cheyenne Wells. Well over a hundred tipis dotted the valley while hundreds of horses grazed nearby.

Earlier that fall, a large group of Arapaho, as well as some Cheyenne, had camped near Fort Lyon. The Fort Lyon reserve also was the site of the Upper Arkansas Indian Agency.

In November, after a change in orders as well as a change in commanders at Fort Lyon, the tribes were prohibited from camping near the fort. Nearly all Cheyenne, as well as a small camp of the Arapaho moved to Sand Creek. On November 29, 1864, Colorado volunteer soldiers attacked this encampment of over 500 people.

During the attack, Indians took shelter in the high banks along Sand Creek. As they fled, many were killed and wounded by artillery fire. Well over half of the dead were women and children. Survivors of the attack fled to the north, hoping to reach a larger band of Cheyenne. The massacre profoundly influenced US-Indian relations and the structure of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes.

Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site was established in 2007 to preserve and protect the cultural landscape of the massacre, enhance public understanding, and minimize similar incidents in the future.



Battle at Summit Springs



The last major battle between the Plains Indians and the U.S. Cavalry took place about 12 miles straight south of Sterling in 1869. Participants in the battle included some 244 officers and men commanded by General Eugene A. Carr, together with 50 Pawnee scouts under Major Frank North. A young man by the name of William F. Cody, also known as Buffalo Bill, had been hired as Chief Scout for the Cavalry.

The Indians under attack were a village of approximately 400-500 renegade southern Cheyenne Dog Soldiers led by their Head Chief, Tall Bull. On the morning of July 11, 1869, the General's advanced scouts, including Buffalo Bill, spotted the Indians' horse herd on the south side of the Summit Springs valley.

After a short, but fierce battle, a total of 52 Indians, including Chief Tall Bull, were found dead on the battlefield. Two white women, who had been taken by the Cheyennes in a raid on homesteader settlements in Kansas Territory, were found shot, including Susanna Alderdyce who died of her wounds and was buried on a hill overlooking the valley.

Four stones mark the battle site which is on private property five miles east of Highway 63 on the Washington/Logan County line.