



## FACT SHEET

### *Where the West Began*

The fertile, game-rich land surrounding the banks of the Trinity River had long been a favorite hunting ground for Native Americans in the area, but it also proved irresistible to settlers as well.

A settlement had been established by Jonathon Bird in the winter of 1840, three miles east of where Birdville is today. In 1843, Sam Houston came to what was then called Fort Bird or Bird's Fort and remained more than a month, awaiting chiefs from different tribes to discuss a peace parley. Houston departed, leaving Gen. Edward H. Tarrant and George W. Terrell to meet with the chiefs.

When the tribes came to the negotiating table, a treaty was made under which the Native Americans were to remain to the west of a line passing through the future site of Fort Worth. The line was marked "Where the West Begins" — giving Fort Worth its famous slogan.

Life in Fort Worth began literally as a U.S. Army outpost on the frontier running through Central Texas. Contrary to popular lore, it was never called "Camp Worth" — that name belonged to an Army post in San Antonio.

To establish control over North Texas, the Republic of Texas attempted to set up a line of "ranger" (militia) forts on the frontier. When the ranger stations proved inadequate, the Army stepped in and took over the job of watching the frontier. It adopted a "picket line" strategy of establishing forts every 100 miles or so, stretching from the Rio Grande in the south to the Red River in the north.

In the spring of 1849, Fort Graham on the Brazos River represented the northern anchor of that defensive line, leaving a 130-mile gap up the Red River that was a blind spot in the state's defenses. To extend the line farther north and close that gap, Col. William Harney, acting commander of the Dept. of Texas after the death of Maj. Gen. Williams Jenkins Worth on May 7, ordered Maj. Ripley Arnold up to the Trinity River.

Major Arnold took a small party of 2nd Dragoon troopers and proceeded to Johnson's Station, where he hooked up with Middleton Tate Johnson and four other civilians. They rode west to a spot near the confluence of the Clear and West forks of the Trinity. There, at the end of May, they planted Old Glory on the future site of Fort Worth.

A week later, Arnold was back with his entire command, the 42 men of Company F, 2nd Dragoons. The men set to work building a fort and, by the end of August, they were ready to move in. The U.S. War Dept. officially granted the name *Fort Worth* to the post on Nov. 14, 1849.

A small civilian community grew up in the comforting shadow of the fort. No more than 100 people lived in the vicinity, most of whom were more dependent on the garrison for economic well-being than safety.

Farther out from the bluffs, the county created by the state legislature in 1849 – Tarrant – also began filling up with homesteaders attracted by the rich soil and the security provided by the Army. During the next four years, the number of settlers grew to some 350 souls.

On Sept. 17, 1853, the fort was vacated. Troops were redeployed as the line marking the Western frontier made another push toward the Pacific.

On March 1, 1873, the town of Fort Worth was incorporated into a city. Dr. W.P. Burts was elected the first mayor. Fort Worth did not adopt the council-city management approach until 1924, when it received a charter from the Texas Legislature.

Fort Worth is a town rich in history and full of patriotism for our country. Veterans who have served the Nation are scattered throughout the community. You never know if you are living next door to an Army medic who sacrificed to save his comrades or standing in line at the grocery store with a Marine who served multiple deployments in Iraq.

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