

# A Walk Through WHIPPLE BARRACKS *Part 1*

by Mick Woodcock, Chief Curator

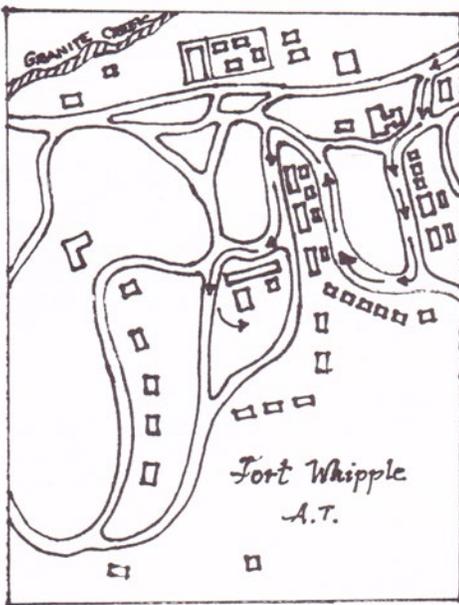
This article was first published in the December 1983 edition of the Museum newsletter and was written by then-Museum Registrar, Mick Woodcock. Edited for clarity and punctuation.

Many visitors to Prescott, and not a few of its residents, wonder how Fort Whipple looked in those early years. The present Whipple veterans' hospital is on the site of the original post, but bears little resemblance to its predecessor.

The original adobe and frame buildings were razed in 1904 to make way for today's hospital. Many of us have wished we could go back in time and visit the fort in its heyday. Through this two-part series, we intend to do just that, by taking a walking tour with the aid of period photographs.

This issue of the "Gazette" [title of the Museum's newsletter at the time of publication] features images from the mid-1870s to the early 1880s. The next will continue with photographs from the mid-1880s through the turn of the century. Refer to the map as you go along and match the numbers with the photographs and follow the arrows.

Fire up your imagination and climb into your buggy on a bright Sunday



morning in summer. Drive down the road to the fort—not present U.S. Highway 89, but one beginning on North Mt. Vernon Street. The Prescott and Arizona Central Railroad and the

Santa Fe, Prescott and Phoenix Railroad will use this route in the future as the grade for their tracks (photo 1). Approach the collection of buildings known as Whipple Depot (center right). Because this is the distribution point for supplies to Camp Verde and Fort Apache, the quartermaster always keeps a dozen or more

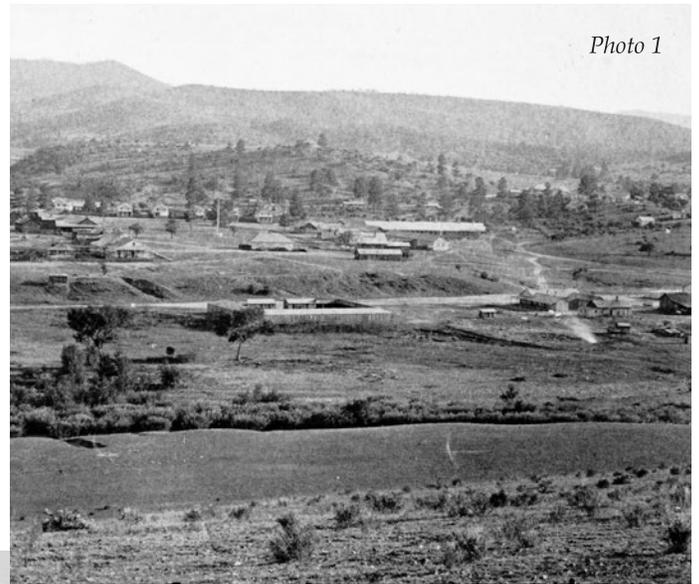


Photo 1



Photo 2

wagons and a hundred or so horses and mules (photo 2).

You notice some men at the depot and stop to talk. They are proud to show you the latest set of pack gear for carrying the Gatling gun on Apache campaigns. You thank them for the show but comment that there probably isn't an Indian around who would sit still while they set that thing up.

Continuing, you comment that it is not a good day to be burning trash as the wind is blowing towards you and the post. You come to the enclosed structure of the cavalry stables and again comment on the wind direction.

As you turn up onto the high ground of the post, you pass "suds row." The washing hanging out back tells you that this

is where the entire population of the fort has its laundry done. The ragamuffin children playing nearby testify that the earnings of a laundress are meager, even when added to the \$13.00 monthly pay of her enlisted husband.

You drive by the hospital on your right, then

quickly turn left down the row of enlisted men's quarters. First along the street are the homes of the married non-commissioned officers; then come two barracks buildings (photo 3). Suddenly there are soldiers everywhere, pouring out for Sunday morning inspection.

Urging your horse into a trot, you arrive at the first set of officers' quarters. You jump down and tie your horse to the convenient fenced circle in front of the house. It is probably there to designate the children's play area,

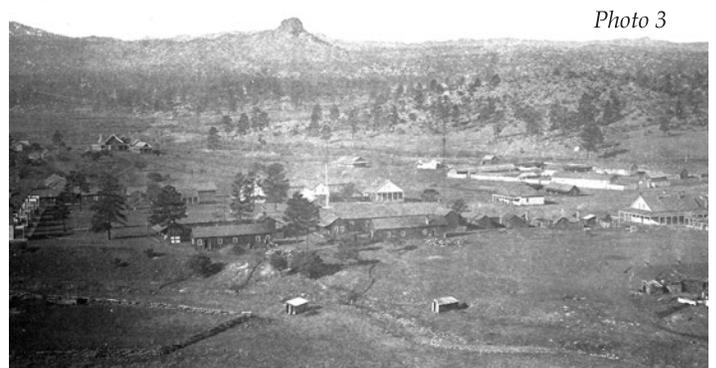


Photo 3

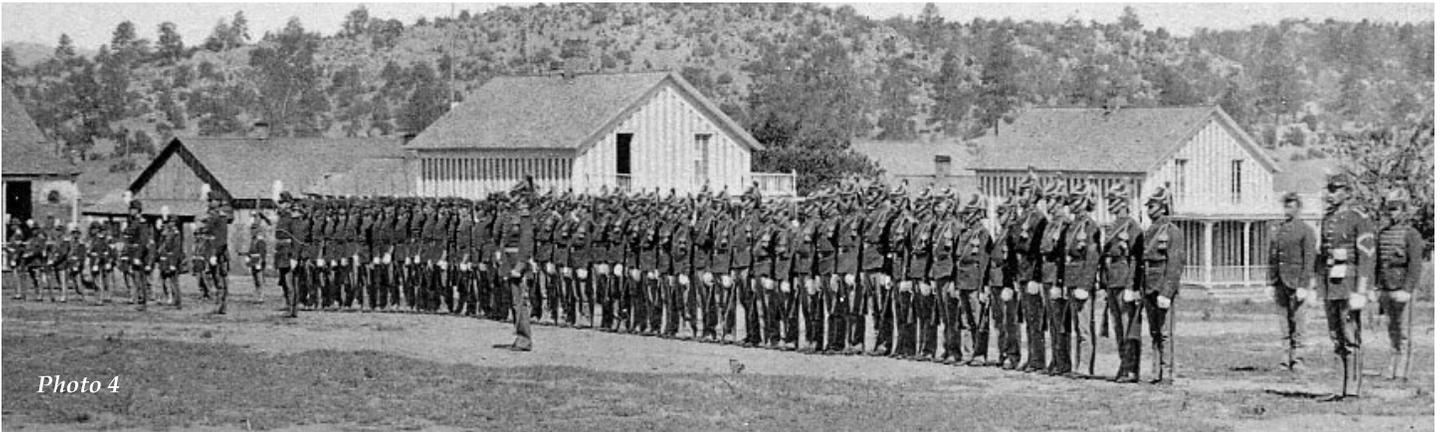


Photo 4

but it serves your purpose nicely. The notes of Adjutant's Call ring out and the troops form rank, facing toward the officers' quarters (photo 4). You step onto the parade ground for a better view and note that men are ready for Department of Arizona Commander Colonel August V. Kautz to command, "Prepare for inspection." Three of the four officers' quarters on the west side of the parade ground are visible behind the soldiers. Two are the one-and-one-half story buildings where you tethered your horse; the other is a single-story structure at the far left.

Between this house and the one to the right you can see a wagon parked in front of the commissary storehouse. Your heart stirs as the drum major in his white busby directs the 8th Infantry Regimental Band, far left of the line, as they play, "Hail, Columbia!" To the right of the band are the men of Company F, 8th Infantry, proud in their dress uniforms. They wear shakos with white pompons, and white trim on their coats. Their officers stand out with white feathers and gilt trim. As your eye proceeds to the right, you behold the splendor of the yellow-trimmed uniforms of Company K, 6th Cavalry. The horse-hair-plumed helmets, aiguillettes, and coat piping add a touch of dash to these guardians of the frontier. At far right you see the sergeant major of the 8th Infantry, looking very official



Photo 5

with the day's reports tucked in his belt. Behind him stands the trumpeter of the cavalry company. As you watch, you talk with D.F. Mitchell, proprietor of Prescott's largest photographic gallery, who is busily recording the post for his series of stereographic view cards (photo 5).

You glance to your right along the row of enlisted barracks and homes that

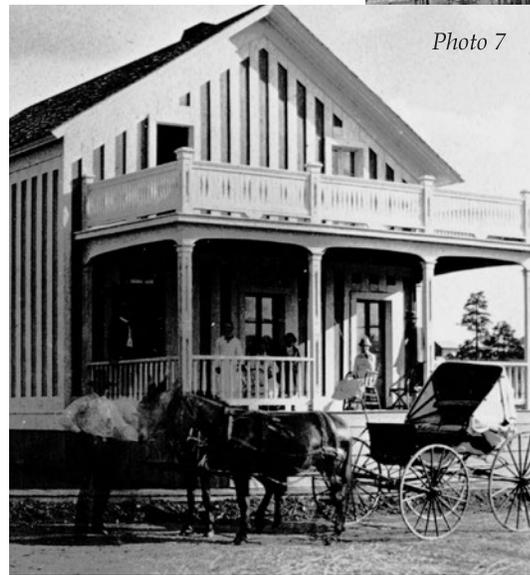


Photo 7

you so hurriedly passed earlier. You wonder if the frame construction with a stove at each end is really adequate for Prescott's cold winters. No doubt the men have done some work to keep the wind from whistling through the cracks.

By this time the inspection is over and you walk to the corner of the parade ground where the

officers' rows meet (photo 6). Some people are on the porch of Lt. Kingsbury's house. The lieutenant is on the

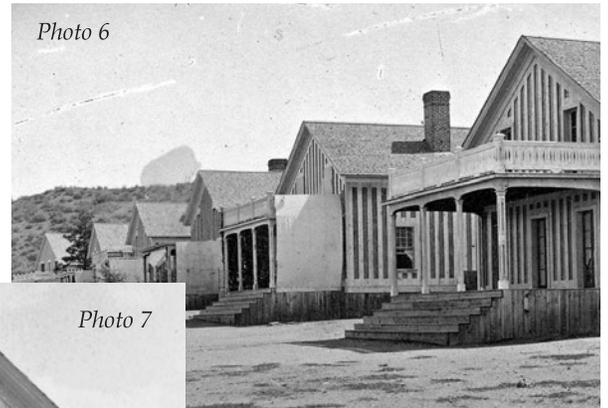


Photo 6

left, talking with some ladies in white cotton dresses. They, no doubt, are visitors from town who have come out in a hired buggy to watch the parade (photo 7).

Admiring the contemporary architecture and decoration of these houses, you look to the left up officers' row and are reminded by the canvas curtains on the porches that it will be hot today. With so few troops on the post, it is a wonder that all of these houses are occupied, since each company has only three officers. You walk along the west side of the parade ground,

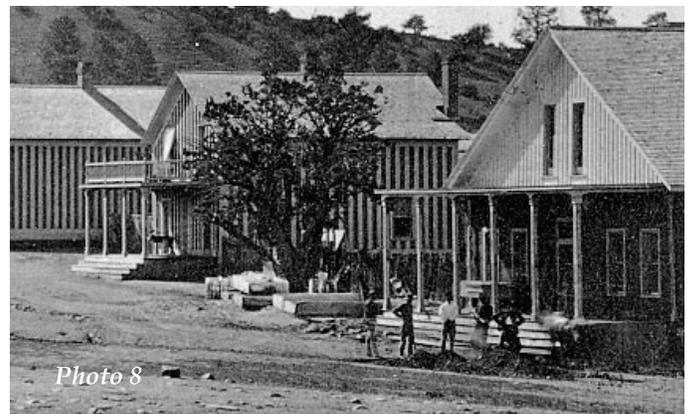


Photo 8

Photo 9

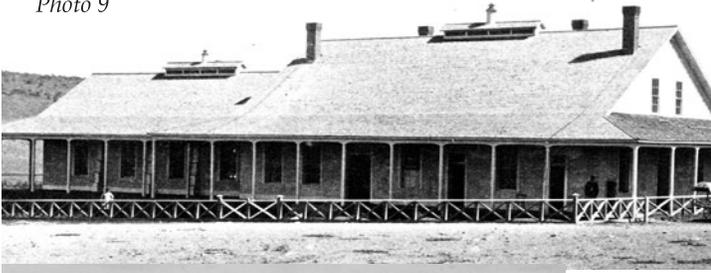


Photo 10

passing the houses you had seen behind the soldiers (photo 8). You turn and look back. Lt. Kingsbury's porch is now empty, but there are people standing in front of the houses closest to you. They appear to be connected in some way with the construction materials behind them, but time does not permit you to speculate further.

Continuing on, you view the hospital from the west side. The adobe walls of the first floor make it one of the more substantial structures on the post. The soldier standing on the porch may be the hospital steward, but it is too far to see his insignia (photo 9).

You turn left and walk around the end of a row of three long buildings, the old headquarters, the commissary storehouse and the quartermaster storehouse. Looking back at the old headquarters building, you notice that a nice breeze has come up, whipping the flag out front a bit. Before the Department of Arizona was created, this was the nerve center of the post. Now that a new building has been built for department affairs, this one has

offices for running the daily routine of Fort Whipple. An officer with open coat, perhaps the Officer of the Day, stands on the porch, catching a breath of fresh air (photo 10).

As you turn to go on your way, you observe men standing by the wagon at the commissary storehouse. These soldiers, under the watchful eye of a pipe-smoking sergeant who sits on the wagon with one foot propped up, take a break from fatigue duties. Perhaps they have been carrying some of the foodstuff out of the building. The man standing on the left reminds you that a smart soldier never wears his best clothes to work in. The old-style coat barely fits him and the man next to him is wearing no coat at all (photo 11).

Headquarters, Department of Arizona. Each set of offices has a stove, not necessary on a day like this, as the men in shirtsleeves and vests will attest, but very welcome in winter. Few expenses have been spared, since military affairs of the entire Territory of Arizona are governed from here. The Apaches have been quiet since the early 1870s, but you can never tell when a band may jump the reservation (photo 12).

A quick peek behind the new headquarters reveals the old post chapel. It is looking a little worse for wear.



Photo 12



Photo 13

You turn right and view with interest the new office building for the

Perhaps the building materials seen here are for a new plaster job on the adobe. The child you have interrupted in his play will probably be called for dinner at any moment. You, too, notice that it is later than you thought and vow to return another

day to continue the exploration of the past (photo 13).



Photo 11