



# In Search of Eldorado

Link to the Eldorado Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VczD1olutQ8>

Day 5

Thursday  
November 7th

On my way to Houston to  
visit Morgan & Matt

Weather

40's Windy and Some Sun



## Hello to Family & Friends

Alright, I'm not proud of it, but my second stop today was Miss Laura's Bordello in Fort Smith, Arkansas. More photos to follow.

Morgan, Kali, do you guys even know what this is? That's right, a public phone booth. Clark Kent would be mighty happy to still see one of these around. I found it in Prairie Grove, Arkansas. It even still works.



## In Search of Eldorado

By Edgar Allan Poe

Gaily bedight,  
A gallant knight,  
In sunshine and in shadow,  
Had journeyed long,  
Singing a song,  
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—  
This knight so bold—  
And o'er his heart a shadow—  
Fell as he found  
No spot of ground  
That looked like Eldorado.

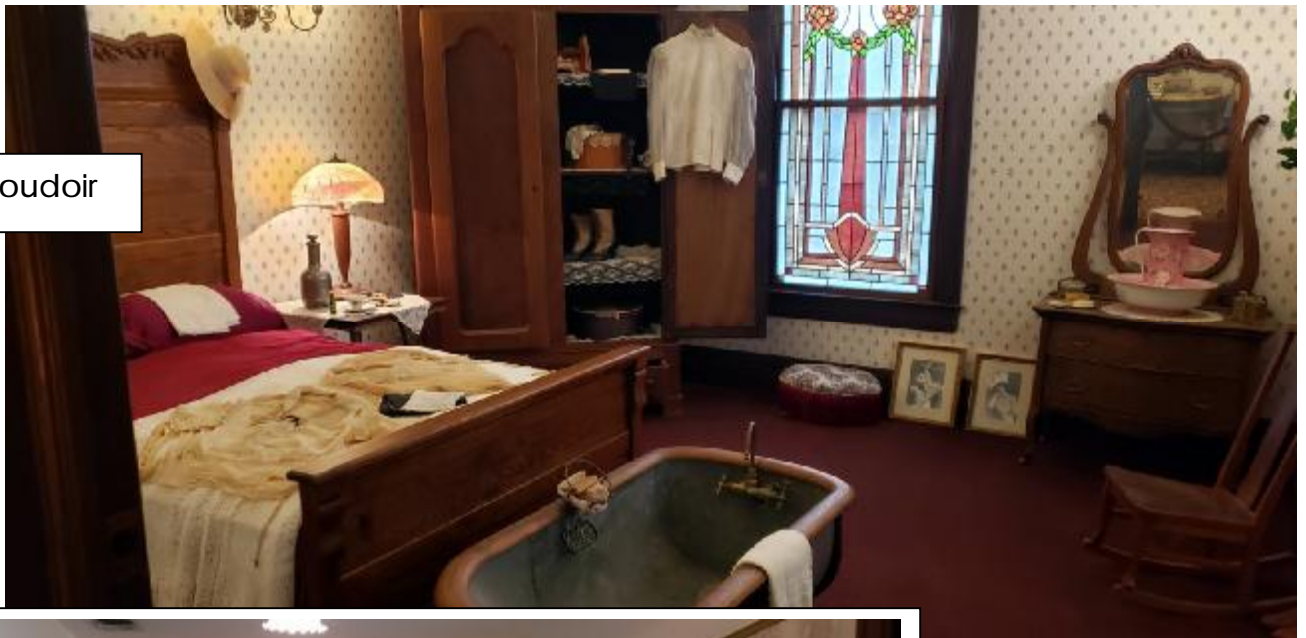
And, as his strength  
Failed him at length,  
He met a pilgrim shadow—  
'Shadow,' said he,  
'Where can it be—  
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains  
Of the Moon,  
Down the Valley of the Shadow,  
Ride, boldly ride,'  
The shade replied,—  
'If you seek for Eldorado!'

Back to the Bordello. Miss Laura's is the only remaining bordello of 7 along Riverfront Dr here in Fort Smith, and it was the fanciest and most expensive. The other six burned down. The bordello's charged one dollar, Miss Laura was able to charge three dollars. That's a likeness of Miss Laura below. Kinda looks like she's entertaining Charlie Chaplin doesn't it?



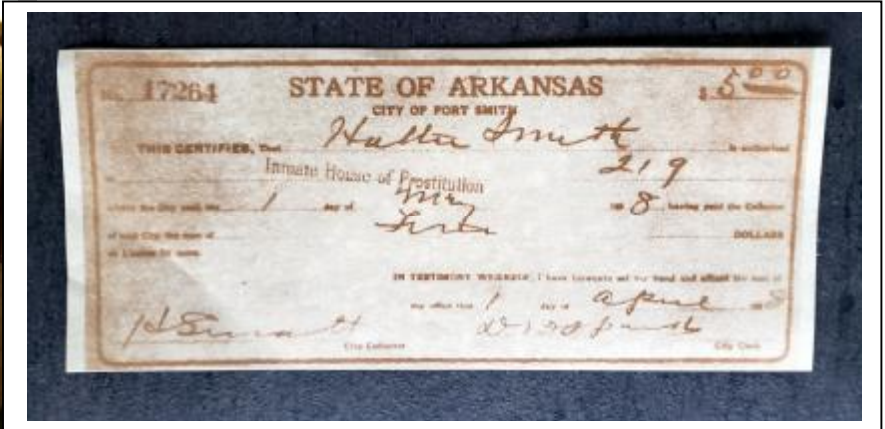
Miss Laura's Boudoir



The upstairs hallway



During my tour of the Clayton House later on, the docent informed me that she used to volunteer at Miss Laura's, and that because of the stained glass window to the left, the staircase was called "The Stairway to Heaven"



Two of the upstairs bedrooms were very nicely furnished and really showed the fashions of the times. Prostitution was egal, but a doctor examined each lady every month and they were given a certificate if they were disease free. The certificate upper right is a duplicate. You can see the one to the right above the bed.





Left is a pretty nice antique buffet. Just wait til you see the furniture in the Clayton House.

The incredible woodwork panel below is called fretwork. This is one of two originals in the bordello



So now you know all about my visit to Miss Laura's Bordello.

Next stop is the Fort Smith National Historic Site. Weather was cold and windy, wind chills probably in the 30's, so I skipped walking the grounds of both forts. My primary interest here was in the judicial portion of history, not the forts. So I skipped the barracks, guardhouse, officer's quarters and Trail of Tears overlook and kept warm in the jail, courthouse and gallows.





The visitor center, theater and original jail are in the basement of the courthouse. The upgraded, 3 level jail is on the 1st, and 2nd floors with the courtroom, and administration occupies the 4th floor over the courtroom

The first Fort Smith



## ★ HELL on the BORDER

You get a sense of this jail in the movie *Hang 'em High* with Clint Eastwood. They portray this jail a couple times in the film.

On the Border - What they are referring to is the border of the Indian Lands and the U.S. (basically Oklahoma)

**I**n the dim squalor of this dingy basement, the federal court confined its prisoners for nearly seventeen years. Two large, overcrowded cells each held thirty to fifty inmates at a time. Guards filled the ceiling space with sawdust in an effort to keep the stench of unbathed prisoners and slop buckets from wafting into the courtroom and offices above.

Here the accused mingled with the convicted, first-timers with hardened characters. The air rang with Indian languages and ethnic accents as prisoners of various backgrounds and races faced their fates. One group absent was women, who were held in the former military guardhouse.





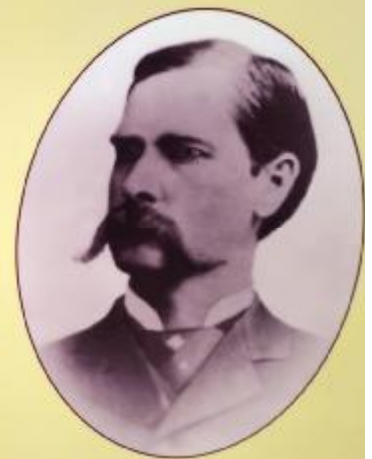
How would you like to use that bathroom?

**T**he Civil War left the Indian country and western Arkansas in ruin. Armies and guerrilla bands had plundered the countryside, burning farms, depleting fields, and stealing livestock. Telegraph lines, roads, and stage routes sustained heavy damage. Amid the devastation, opportunity seekers headed west. In the Indian Territory, tribal governments, still trying to repair the damage of internal wartime dissension, faced a flood of “intruders”—cattle drovers, railroad workers, and people passing through. The chaos invited a crime wave.

When the U.S. Court for the Western District of Arkansas moved from Van Buren, Arkansas, to Fort Smith, Marshal Logan Roots looked to the abandoned military buildings to house prisoners. With iron bars already on the basement windows, the former barracks was ideal. The courtroom itself would occupy the first floor. The court’s reputation for swift justice began with the first conviction, on November 18, 1872. John Childers, found guilty of murder, became the first man executed on the Fort Smith gallows.

#### Wyatt Earp

Although later famous for his skills as a western lawman, Earp was a 23-year-old horse thief when placed in the federal jail in Van Buren in 1871. Released on bond, he never returned to face the charges.



# The FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES



**CREEK**  
 Cherokee artist John J. Moore painted this woman in 1906. She is wearing a necklace of cowrie shells, a traditional Creek ornament.

What does it mean to be "civilized"? U.S. citizens in the 19th century assumed that their own lifestyles represented humanity's highest state. This belief dominated Indian policy and prompted federal agents to urge all Indians to adopt Christianity, the English language, and American agricultural techniques. After some success among southeastern tribes, government officials and prominent American men labeled the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole the "Five Civilized Tribes." An even greater assimilation and accommodation could not spare these tribes the tragedy of removal.



**SEMINOLE**  
 John P. Parker's sketch of the long-haired, red-skinned man in the Civil War era. Parker's sketch is based on a portrait by John J. Moore, circa 1830.

Many tribals in the Southeast viewed the waves of white settlers as the colonial men, the American Revolution, and the War of 1812. When fighting failed, some tribes changed their lives to survive. Some tribes with black slaves, missionary schools and churches, and literacy in English appeared in many for social, religious, and economic reasons.

As the Five Tribes struggled with changes in their societies, they faced mounting pressure of their independence. The U.S. government, yielding to the insatiable land hunger of white settlers, became less and less willing to regard the tribes as sovereign nations. Even so, 1837 Cherokee removal provided an end to the United States' civil war, paving the way for land sales and farm removal.

**CHOCTAW**  
 The Choctaw and other Native Americans in the Southeast were forced to leave their homes and move to Indian Territory in the 1830s. This painting is by John J. Moore, circa 1906.



**CHICKASAW**  
 Chickasaw warrior, circa 1830. The artist is John J. Moore, circa 1906. The Chickasaw were the second to be removed to Indian Territory.



**CHEROKEE**  
 John J. Moore's portrait of an elderly Cherokee man, likely a member of the Cherokee Nation. Moore's portrait is based on a painting by John J. Moore, circa 1906. The Cherokee were the first to be removed to Indian Territory.

If you ever watch *The Outlaw Josie Wales* you will hear Chief Dan George tell Clint Eastwood about The Civilized Tribes and The Trail of Tears.

## The Second Fort Smith





Towards the end of the 1800's, this center portion of the courthouse was added and a three-level jail was constructed inside. Left you can see the three levels, each containing 10 cells like those above, and right is an individual cell. They were all surrounded by the steel fence, again to the left.



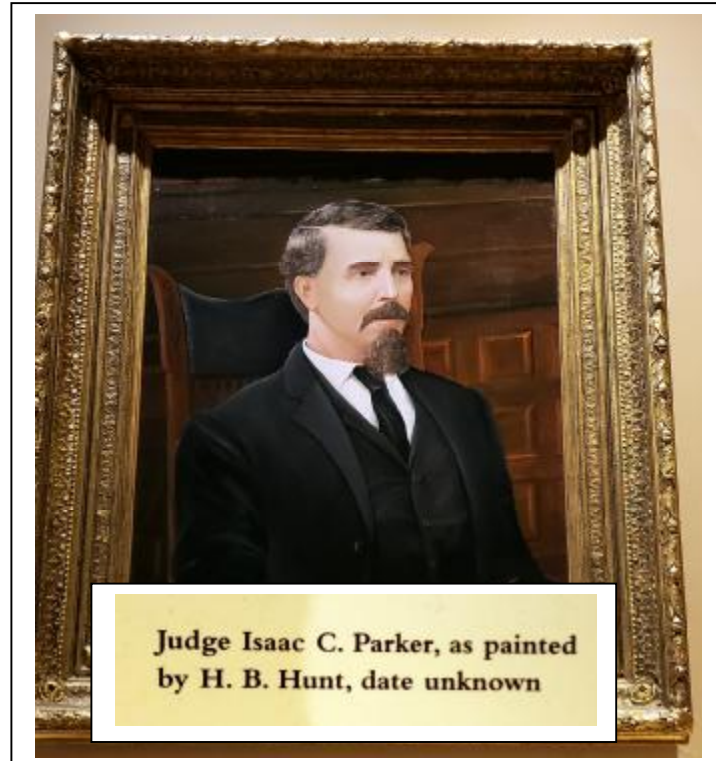
There were a lot of complaints from politicians about the original jail conditions, causing the government to make the changes on this page. Judge Parker was gone by the time these cells went up.



The Fort Smith court was not immune to the disruptions and chaos of post-Civil War politics. Between 1871 and 1874, the personnel of the Western District of Arkansas openly engaged in schemes to earn themselves profits from the business of the federal court. Even the judge, William Story, a Wisconsin native, participated in bribery, fraudulent claims, and embezzlement.

I guess William Story is not one of Wisconsin's most prized representatives.

rampant corruption. By 1874, Judge Story faced impeachment charges. He traveled to Washington where he submitted his resignation on June 16. Almost a year later Isaac Charles Parker arrived in Fort Smith to take control of the administration of justice in the Western District of Arkansas.



Judge Isaac C. Parker, as painted by H. B. Hunt, date unknown



Above is the courtroom of Judge Parker "The Hangin' Judge". Judge Parker never watched any of the hangings. On another note, I mentioned *True Grit* yesterday, it's here in Judge Parker's courtroom where Mattie Ross watches Rooster Cogburn testify. Rooster is one of Judge Parker's US Marshalls

Long before arriving in Fort Smith, Isaac Parker began a career in law and politics that made him an ideal candidate for the judgeship of the Western District of Arkansas. Born in Ohio in 1838, he studied law there and passed the bar in 1859. Soon afterward he moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, to begin his practice. With the outbreak of the Civil War, he became a Republican and served with the Union militia in Missouri. Between 1862 and 1870 he worked as a city attorney, state's attorney, and state judge. In 1870 he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Parker married Missouri native Mary O'Toole; the couple had two sons, Charles and James.

## The Gallows

With the largest criminal jurisdiction of any federal court at that time, the Western District of Arkansas handled an extraordinary number of murder and rape cases. When a jury found defendants guilty in these capital cases, federal law mandated the death penalty. In Fort Smith, that meant an execution by hanging on a "crude and unsightly" gallows.

Judge Isaac C. Parker sentenced 160 people (four of whom were women) to hang. Of these, 79 men were hanged.



Not the original gallows, but a close facsimile



The Clayton House. Please note the OPEN sign in the window to the left.

*Closed  
for a  
Private Event.  
We Apologize for the Inconvenience.*

Built 1882 – Not quite a hundred percent accurate. The right half of the house was built around 1850. Clayton bought it for \$3000 in 1882, then for another \$3000 he built the rest of it.

BUILT  
1882

Plenty of parking right out front. It was not in my original plan to visit this house, but the Ranger at Fort Smith highly recommended it. So here I am. I tried the front door – Locked. I knocked on the front door – No answer. As I made my way around to the left porch I was saying to myself “Not again, you have got to be kidding me.” How many times in Arizona did the sign say open, but the door was locked. I checked the side door – “Please use front or back door”. I already tried the front so I continued around to the back door where I found the sign to the left. Inconvenience my bleep. As I was approaching the RV another couple began their walk from the front door to the side door. I shouted “Their closed” just as the front door opened and the docent invited us in. A much needed change in luck.

There was just the three of us for the tour, and ironically, the other couple was from Houston.

Who is William Clayton? He was the prosecutor in Judge Parker's courtroom. Clayton was the man who tried to convict all the criminals, Judge Parker is the one who passed sentence on the guilty ones.



This is called an Artist's Pallet Table. I wonder why they chose that name? JK The table and lamp are original to the house.



The hall tree above was one of my favorites.

Quite the grand piano.



Above - The dining room table set for eight.

On the right is an individual place setting.

Below - The House is a venue for weddings. We were told to just imagine the bride coming down the staircase to the parlor.





I am usually pretty good at not catching myself in the mirror. I guess I wasn't paying attention this time.

Can you believe that bed to the right? This piece was donated by a woman who used it every night. Who would believe that someone could find another house with a 12' ceiling that the bed would fit in.



## GENERAL WILLIAM O. DARBY

ORIGINAL COMMANDER OF THE U.S. ARMY RANGERS

"ONWARD WE STAGGER, AND IF THE TANKS COME,  
MAY GOD HELP THE TANKS"

SCULPTOR: KEVIN KRESSE

DEDICATED APRIL 30TH, 2016

It wasn't that long ago that I watched  
*Darby's Rangers* starring James Garner



### **SOLDIER LEADER FORT SMITHIAN**

WILLIAM ORLANDO DARBY (1911-1945) WAS THE ORIGINAL COMMANDER OF THE U.S. ARMY RANGERS, AN ELITE FORCE PATTERNED AFTER, AND TRAINED BY, THE LEGENDARY BRITISH COMMANDOS. DARBY'S RANGERS WERE THE FIRST AMERICAN SOLDIERS TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE THE GERMAN ARMY IN COMBAT, AT A DESPERATE TIME WHEN AMERICA HAD FEW RESOURCES TO COUNTER NAZI AGGRESSION IN EUROPE.

SPEARHEADING AMPHIBIOUS INVASIONS IN NORTH AFRICA, SICILY AND ITALY, DARBY'S RANGERS QUICKLY ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES AS A PREMIER FIGHTING UNIT WHOSE METHODS BECAME THE CORNERSTONE OF TODAY'S SPECIALIZED INFANTRY FORMATIONS. GENERAL DARBY'S COMMAND WAS UNIQUE IN THAT BOTH OFFICERS AND MEN TRAINED, FOUGHT AND DIED TOGETHER. THE ORIGINAL FIVE-HUNDRED RANGERS SUFFERED A NINETY PERCENT CASUALTY RATE.

GENERAL WILLIAM ORLANDO DARBY WAS KILLED IN HIS CUSTOMARY PLACE AT THE FRONT OF HIS COMMAND, JUST DAYS BEFORE WWII ENDED IN EUROPE. HIS COURAGE AND SACRIFICE WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED.

Can anyone guess what momentous event occurred inside that building below? If you guessed that in 1958 Elvis was given his military haircut here, you'd be right. Right here, on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1958, Elvis was given his first Army buzz cut. The barber's widow still has the clippers and another barber took the chair. Elvis was supposed to arrive in January, but he received a hardship delay. The hardship was actually the studio that needed him to finish a film before he joined up. To kind of escape the hullabaloo, Elvis had his sideburns and hair trimmed before he arrived.



Unfortunately, the historic district and barbershop, of the now decommissioned Fort Chaffee, closed at 4:00 and I arrived at 4:20. At least the Clayton House was open.





I drove down to Hot Springs, Arkansas after leaving Fort Smith. Since it's supposed to be 31 degrees here tonight I wanted to find a campground and have electricity for the heat. Timber something Mobile Home and RV Park. \$20 for the night.

I did want to do several hikes in Hot Springs National Park tomorrow, but the high of 46 and recent rains making the paths into mudslides instead of hiking trails may dissuade me. We will see what tomorrow brings.

Until next time.....