



In Search of El dorado

A daily journal of my travels and adventures in my.....Search for Eldorado

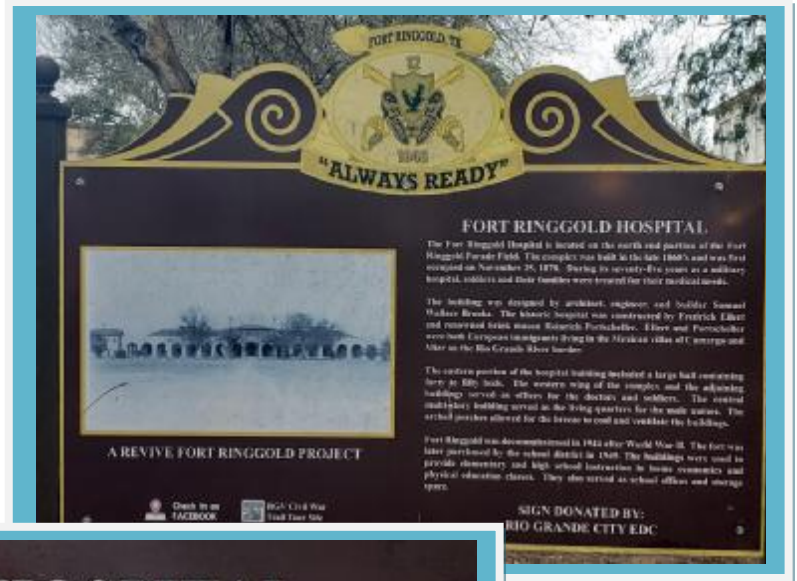
Hello to Family & Friends

Saturday, February 13th 2021 Day 27



I sat in a Lowes lot, free wifi, writing the newsletter and watching a movie before moving to the little cul-de-sac near the museum I mentioned, for the night. I was sound asleep when at 2:30 there came a knocking at my door. "Police!" I took a few moments for my brain to kick in and figure out how to unlock the door.

When I did there was a large policeman standing there with a flashlight. "Where are you from?" Wisconsin. "Where are you headed?" Just touring around Texas. "Just parked here overnight?" Yup. "You'll be gone in the morning?" Yup. "Well, you're not blocking any driveways. Have a good night." He did mention that someone called and said there was a vehicle parked here. There was another man standing back a good twenty feet, maybe one of the employees of one of the buildings. I said thanks and went back to bed. Unfortunately it took me a while to fall back asleep.



FORT RINGGOLD HOSPITAL

The Fort Ringgold Hospital is located on the north end portion of the Fort Ringgold Parade Field. The complex was built in the late 1860's and was first occupied on November 25, 1870. During its seventy-five years as a military hospital, soldiers and their families were treated for their medical needs.

I spent a good portion of the morning researching RV batteries. I am disappointed that these are only fourteen months old and won't hold a charge through the night when the furnace is running. I was still kind of planning on heading to Falfurrious, but after some shopping at WalMart and gas at Sam's I sat in the parking lot and researched the Falfurrious sights. Nothing is open and there was not much of a choice for overnights, even looking at campgrounds, \$38 a night. I haven't spent a penny on lodging yet. Skipping Falfurrious to Laredo I decided to just head towards Laredo from here. Rio Grande City is on the way and Fort Ringgold is there to check out. As you can see above, that's where I ended up.



The building was designed by architect, engineer, and builder Samuel Wallace Brooks. The historic hospital was constructed by Fredrick Ellert and renowned brick mason Heinrich Portscheller. Ellert and Portscheller were both European immigrants living in the Mexican villas of Camargo and Mier on the Rio Grande River border.

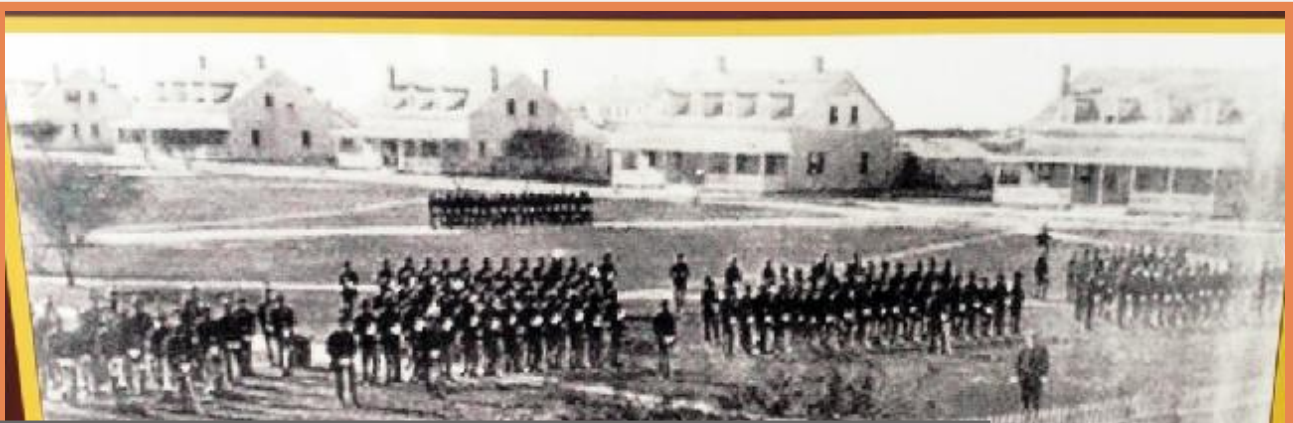
The eastern portion of the hospital building included a large hall containing forty to fifty beds. The western wing of the complex and the adjoining buildings served as offices for the doctors and soldiers. The central multi-story building served as the living quarters for the male nurses. The arched porches allowed for the breeze to cool and ventilate the buildings.

Fort Ringgold was decommissioned in 1944 after World War II. The fort was later purchased by the school district in 1949. The buildings were used to provide elementary and high school instruction in home economics and physical education classes. They also served as school offices and storage space.

After passing the unoccupied entry kiosk I found all the roads barricaded. So I parked and went for a walk. A cold walk. The info boards above and below don't really tell the history, so I will fill that in a little here.

Fort Ringgold is the southernmost of the forts constructed at the end of the Mexican War. On October 26, 1848 Bvt. Maj. LaMotte led two companies to Davis Landing. The army leased 33 acres from town founder Henry Clay Davis, whose heirs sold 350 acres to the government in 1878 for \$20,000. First known as the Post at Davis Landing, Camp Ringgold, and Ringgold Barracks, it was officially named Fort Ringgold in honor of Bvt. Maj. Samuel Ringgold, the first officer to die from wounds received in the Battle of Palo Alto. Fort Ringgold hosted a number of prominent military figures including Robert E Lee, John J Pershing and possibly Jefferson Davis. Captain Leander McNelly and a company of Texas Rangers also garrisoned the post. The Cortina War (Juan N Cortina) and unrest during the Mexican Revolution are only two of the times the presence of the fort was a fortunate circumstance.

THE FORT RINGGOLD PARADE FIELD



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The Fort Ringgold Parade Field was the center of activity during the military phase between 1848 and 1944. Cavalry soldiers held military parades, training exercises, military ceremonies, drills, and arranged their bivouac, or temporary camps. A garrison pole, sundial, and a large megaphone were used during the military exercises and were situated on the south side of the parade grounds.

The megaphone was used for morning reveille and evening taps for the Fort Ringgold soldiers and the surrounding community. The parade field was surrounded by the hospital, barracks, officers' quarters, provost marshal and jail, the Non-Commissioned Officers' Club and Commanding Officers' office. Palm trees, pecan trees, evergreens, and citrus trees lined the perimeter of the historic parade field.

Local residents have since used the parade field for marching band practice, little league baseball practice, soccer games, as well as, a playground for various schools in the area.

Hurricane Beulah 1967 - Fort Ringgold Disaster Relief Center



President Lyndon B. Johnson's Presidential helicopter landed on the parade grounds of Fort Ringgold in Rio Grande City, Texas on September 28, 1967 shortly after Hurricane Beulah.

President Lyndon B. Johnson (center) toured the grounds of Fort Ringgold, Texas following Hurricane Beulah. He visited the Rio Grande Valley to survey the damage left by the hurricane.

U.S. Army helicopters provided transport to the refugees from Mexico. Thousands of Mexican citizens fled their country due to flooding by the hurricane. The refugees arrived the day before and were housed in the Fort Ringgold school buildings. Mexican refugees began returning to their homes via Army helicopters on October 2, 1967.

There is more info on the website if you're interested. I don't feel like paraphrasing and typing tonight.

<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/fort-ringgold>



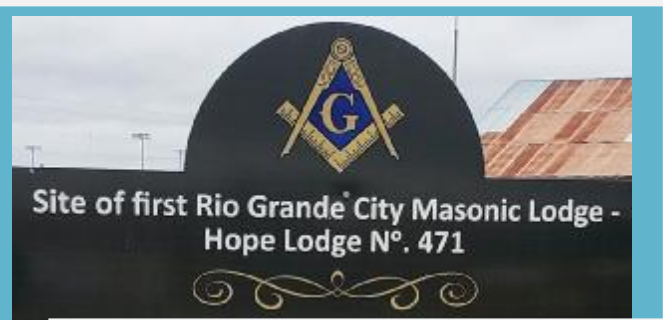
Granted, I don't know the time frames here, but I would be a little leery of elementary school children taking classes in buildings like the one above. These barracks were probably built in the 1850's, and a banner on the next one in line was labeled as 'something education in the 21st century' so they were used until not too long ago.



The Robert E. Lee House



The paragraph was too wide to fit so I'm typing it in – The Lee house was built in 1848 as the home of the commanding officer of Ringgold Barracks. It was built on a slight knoll with the best view of the post. Lt. Col. Lee was stationed in San Antonio with the *U.S. Army* in 1856 when he visited for one month to hear a court martial trial. His diary states he slept in a tent but visited the commander in the house. He visited again in 1860 with orders to stop the actions of Juan Cortina. Lee's orders included taking American troops into Mexico. Fortunately, this action was not necessary. Once again he probably visited the commander. So that was paraphrased from the info board, As I read it again while typing I came to realize the guy was probably inside this house for a couple hours of his lifetime. It's not like he slept here.



Site of first Rio Grande City Masonic Lodge -
Hope Lodge N^o. 471

The Robert E. Lee House at Fort Ringgold, Texas was the first home of Hope Lodge N^o. 471. In 1876 local members petitioned to get a charter for the lodge. The lodge was permitted its use to conduct its meetings and on December 17th, 1877, Hope Lodge N^o. 471 was chartered as a full pledged lodge. Among one notable lodge member was Henry Clay Davis, the founder of Rio Grande City. Several Fort Ringgold Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers were instrumental in standing up the lodge. Henry S. Pearce served as the first Worshipful Master. Through the early 1900's, local members were allowed to hold meetings at the Lee House. The permanent lodge later moved to downtown Rio Grande City. In 1957, Hope Lodge N^o. 471 moved to its current location on West Main Street.

FORT RINGGOLD MORGUE

The two-story building was built in 1917. The basement served as the storage for the bodies of the fallen soldiers. The first floor of the building included offices and the second floor served as living quarters for the female nurses assigned to the fort hospital.

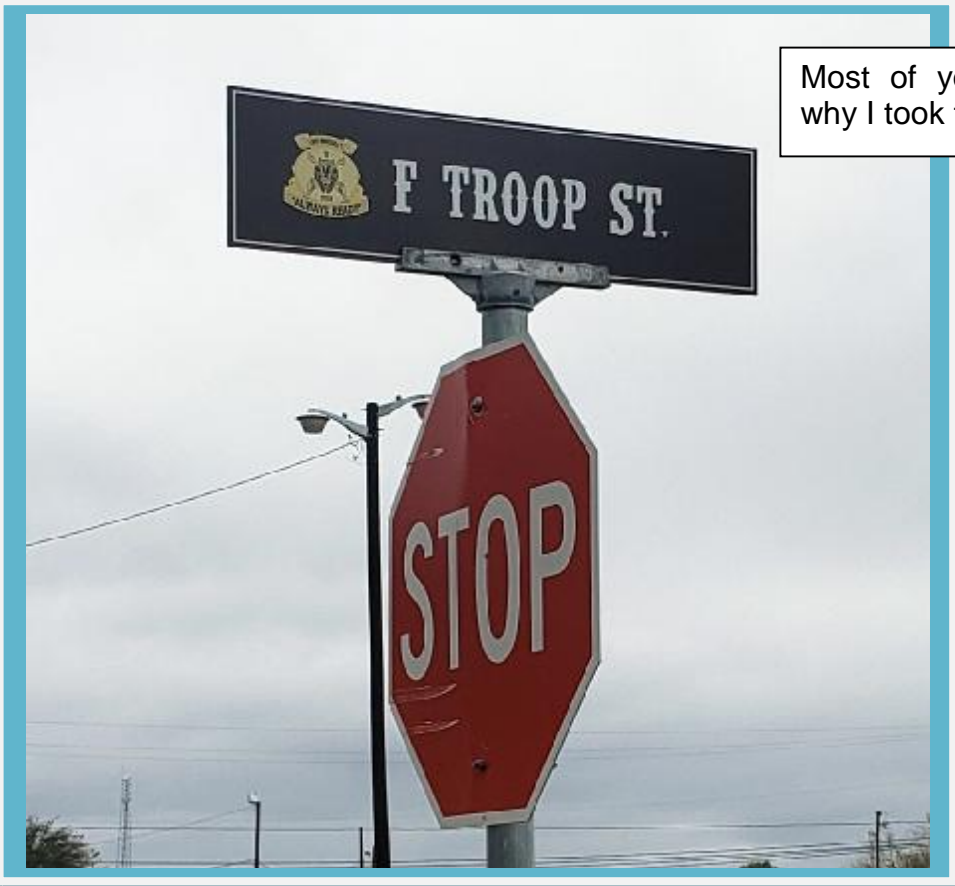
The deceased veterans remained in the morgue until they were laid to rest at the Fort Ringgold Cemeteries. The burial ground for the white soldiers and their family members was south of the football stadium, while the cemetery for the African Americans was located closer to the river. In 1947, the buried remains were reinterred at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio, Texas.

After the closing of the military fort, the building was used for high school art classes, a teachers' credit union, school offices, and storage facilities.

Yea, how would you like to take art classes in the morgue? I'll bet that teacher had some pretty small class sizes.



Most of you will understand why I took this picture





If anyone out there goes camping, especially boondocking, you have to have the Allstays App. I use it several times every day for the whereabouts of WalMart, Sam's, Costco, LP, dump stations, gas stations, campgrounds, free camping, rest areas, Lowes, Home Depot, Dicks Sporting Goods, Cabelas, and on and on. Paying for the Pro version is worth it.

The photo above is my spot for the night in the Falcon County Park. Some dirt roads in a field with water, toilets and showers, and it's free. Thirty seconds on the app and I knew where I was headed. It looks like some of these people have been here for awhile.

I'm about 90 minutes from Laredo. Just around the bend from me is where the U.S. and Mexico have jointly built a dam across the Rio Grande making a large reservoir. There are lots of branches and inlets so there must be some higher ground, in fact the hill I'm on is 600 feet above sea level. Comparatively, most of the Rio Grande Valley is 100 feet or less.

It feels warmer up here too. The temp climbed to 39 as I pulled into the park.

There is the reservoir here to check out, then Zapata, then Laredo.

I was going to mention that there is a Boondockers Welcome member near Zapata, five bucks a night if I want electric, free if I don't. Maybe tomorrow night. That would increase my average lodging costs on this trip from \$0 to thirteen cents a night.

Until next time.....