



In Search of El dorado

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

Hello to Family & Friends

Wednesday, February 17th 2021 Day 31



Above we have Texas along the Mexican border. They just aren't used to or ready for this type of event. Traffic lights are still out, a good share of the town without power, food and water shortages. Morgan informs me that 4.3 million people in Texas are without electricity and city water pressure is dropping due to city water shortages. I have received emails to be on standby for snow and ice claims in Texas. I can't work claims down here, I have no equipment with me, but they did ask me to maybe review files which I can do from anywhere.



Above is the World Trade International Bridge. I don't know about you, but to me it looks like we are importing a lot more from Mexico than we are exporting. The following is from cbp.gov

LAREDO, Texas—U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Office of Field Operations (OFO) officers at the Laredo Port of Entry seized narcotics in separate, unrelated incidents that totaled over \$1.6 million in street value. Three separate shipments of packages containing 114 pounds of cocaine were seized on January 26-27, 2021 by CBP officers at World Trade Bridge. In each case it was a semi loaded with items other than cocaine.

The narcotics combined have an estimated street value of \$1,632,485.

A good haul, but unfortunately, probably only a drop in the bucket.



I found out last night that Laredo has four bridges that carry traffic across the Rio Grande, the World Trade International Bridge above is the largest and busiest in town. It took a little finagling to find this viewpoint, a couple dead ends, passing by the turnoff and turning around, and then about a quarter-mile hike to the top of a hill. It was worth it though. It also felt good to get out and walk in the sunshine and not wear a winter coat. It hit 56 degrees today, Whoopie! The view above is looking north. U.S. to the right, Mexico to the left. I ate lunch back in the RV and tried to get a signal.



This is gonna sound weird, but how can anybody live in this town with such poor cell reception. Being on vacation and depending on my phone for directions, finding lodging (parking), finding food, finding propane, finding the cheapest gas (if they have any), finding a dump station, museums, sights, etc., it has become very difficult. I thought I had it in Tom Tom, but it took me, literally, to a spot in a median in the middle of HWY 83, eight miles from where I wanted to go. Trying to get back the phone kept saying 'trying to find a GPS signal'. I have had fewer issues in the desert. The destination is Fort McIntosh, and I ended up driving through what looked to be some pretty rough areas of Laredo. There is a bridge over the railroad yard which leads right onto the Laredo Community College campus in about thirty seconds. The bridge was barricaded with no detour signs. Thirty *minutes* later I arrived.

The campus was deserted. I drove around a little, found a few old buildings, and stopped to try and get a walking map on the internet I had seen before. No luck. The Environmental Science Center above is on my itinerary, but it was the sign below which made me pull into the lot. I sat there for a minute and then a door opened and a guy walked up and asked me if he could help. We talked for awhile about the Center, which has been closed since March; my winter travels the past few years; the cold weather; he told me the power had just come back on; the Fort buildings; the Fort cemetery; and he wished me happy travels.



As with all these signs that you will see, the top description is what the building is used for today, the bottom is what it was during its Fort days.

I found a parking lot and decided to go for another walk.

Left is the Company Storehouse, built in 1868.



The Bakery – Built in 1869



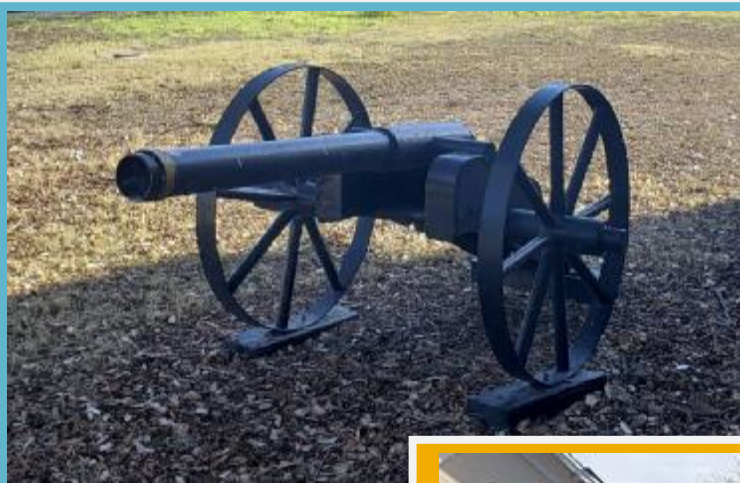


I could see this structure from the bakery and thought by its construction that it was on the older side. From the front I guessed it was probably the commandant's house. After I took the photo, the roof is cut off due to trees behind me and the sun in front of me, a gentleman came walking around the left side on the porch. We got to talking; he lives in the house and is the President of the College; he was just out feeding the squirrels; he has been President for five years and has never seen it this cold in Laredo; he is the first President to ever close the college, but he had to because of Covid; the house was built in 1880, the same year as the chapel next door; that 300-400 troops occupied the Fort during WWI; how it is strange to look across the river (this is one of the highest points in Laredo) and see lights on in Mexico but none here; they have a new building that has not even been dedicated yet where the chiller coils froze and caused a 10" pipe to burst, water all over two floors and into classrooms causing damage to furniture and lab equipment; they paid a million dollars for that chiller which will be sent back to Trane because of inferior materials and workmanship; this of course led into my work as an insurance adjuster; my historic interest in Fort McIntosh; my travels again the past few years; and then he gave me permission to park overnight in the parking lot, which is fantastic and for which I thanked him profusely. Then I continued my walk.

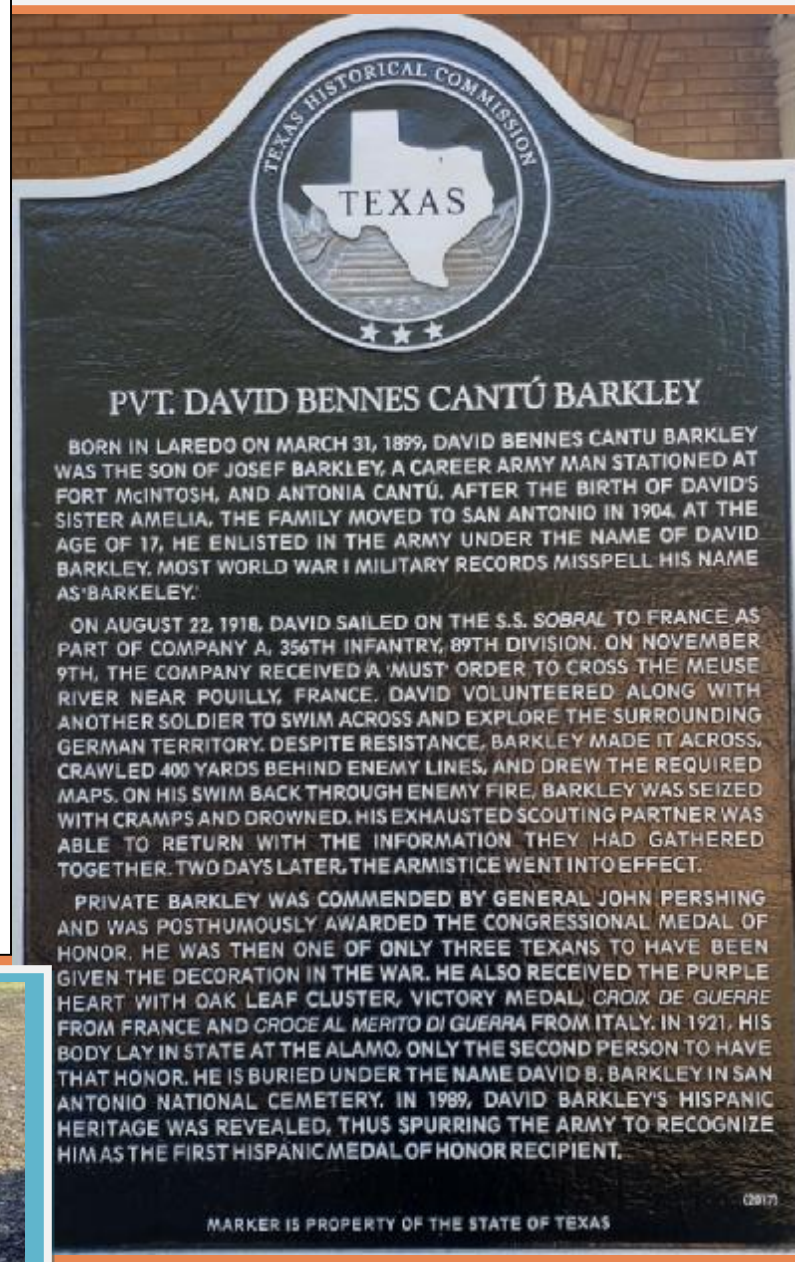


Fort McIntosh.

Fort McIntosh, on the Rio Grande near Laredo, was established in the aftermath of the Mexican War and abandoned after World War II. American occupation of the former Spanish presidio dates from the arrival in November 1846 of Capt. Mirabeau B. Lamar, former president of the Republic of Texas, with the Laredo Guard of the Texas Volunteers. Pursuant to the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which terminated the war with Mexico and settled the boundary question in favor of the United States, the government dispatched Lt. Egbert Ludovicus Vielé, subsequent designer of Central Park in New York City, from Ringgold Barracks (see FORT RINGGOLD) with a company of the First United States Infantry. On March 3, 1849, the unit reached the banks of the Rio Grande in Webb County, where they set up a camp of tents on a bluff to the west of Laredo. They named the post Camp Crawford, in honor of Secretary of War George W. Crawford. In January 1850 the site became Fort McIntosh, in tribute to Lt. Col. James S. McIntosh, killed three years earlier in the battle of Molino Del Rey.



It's fairly obvious why they have a cannon here, but I am a little baffled by the caboose. I have seen no mention of train activity associated with the fort, but it was nicely refurbished and you know I like trains.



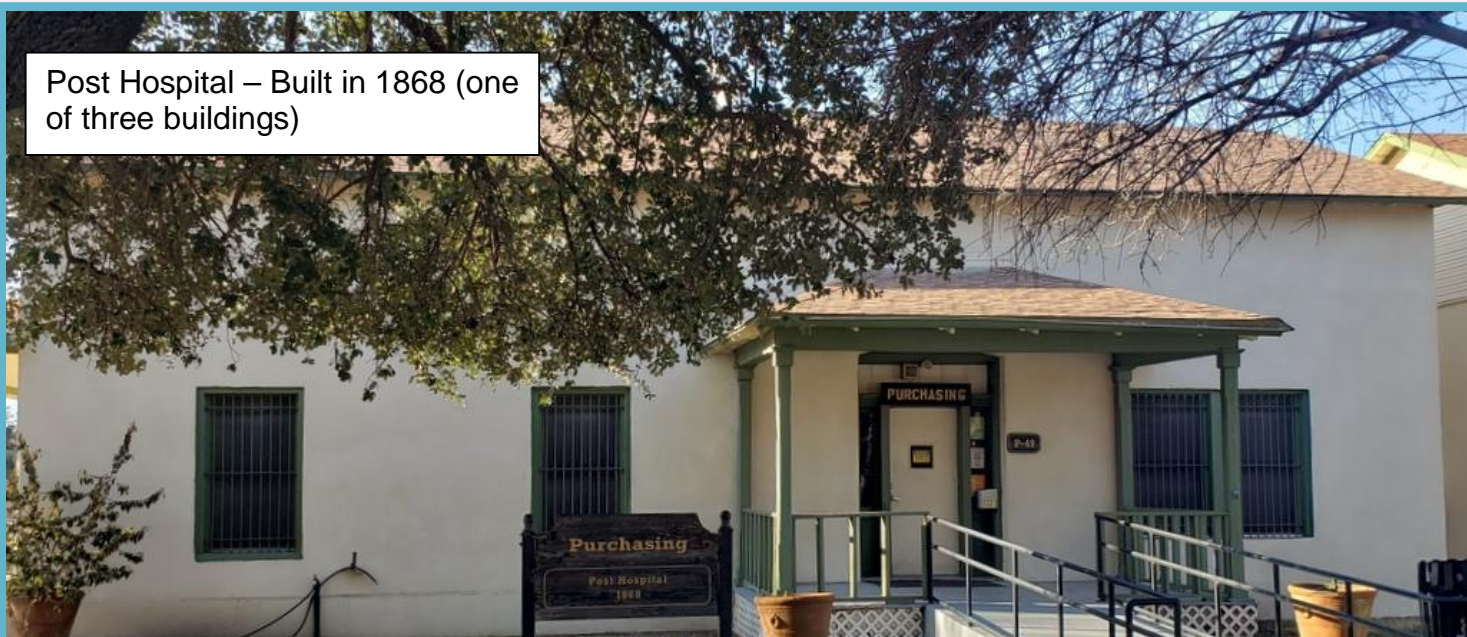
Fort McIntosh formed a key link in the dual chain of forts that lined the Rio Grande and the western frontier. Its geographical location, intense summer heat, and scarcity of rainfall and tillable soil made the location undesirable, but the post nevertheless provided the area a measure of military and economic security. Comanches and Lipan Apaches harassed the region; the adjacent river ford was popularly known as Indian Crossing. An inspection by Col. J. K. F. Mansfield in 1856 confirmed McIntosh's strategic value, and the temporary removal of the garrison three years later depressed the local economy.



Post Guardhouse – Built in 1886

The fort was initially a star-shaped earthwork built by army engineers and troop labor. The Indian problem expanded the normally small garrison at times to over 400 men, including prominent officers Philip H. Sheridan and Randolph B. Marcy and Texas Ranger John S. Ford. The outbreak of the Civil War resulted in Union abandonment and Confederate occupation of the fort. During the war Fort McIntosh sustained several unsuccessful Northern assaults. In 1865 federal soldiers returned and inaugurated a period of stability. Permanent construction began three years later, and within the next decade the installation was greatly enhanced. In 1875, after a series of leases, Laredo ceded to the federal government 208 acres adjoining the considerably larger original site. Barracks and temporary structures were erected during World War II. Infantry, cavalry, field artillery, an engineer squadron, and national guard units operated in turns from the premises.

Post Hospital – Built in 1868 (one of three buildings)



Black troops garrisoned McIntosh without notable incident in the 1870s, but their return after the Spanish-American War started a racial conflict that presaged later outbursts at Brownsville and Houston. Complaining of police brutality, an undetermined number of soldiers from Company D of the Twenty-fifth Infantry beat and clubbed a peace officer in October 1899. Governor Joseph Sayers responded to the public outcry by demanding the removal of all black troops from the state. The furor subsided with the arrest of several infantrymen and the growing alarm of the citizenry that Washington might close the post altogether.

This was a huge building



The Mexican Revolution and two world wars prolonged the utility of Fort McIntosh long after transportation improvements rendered the old frontier posts obsolete. The war department discontinued the installation on May 31, 1946, when the Boundary Commission acquired the northern half of the property and the city of Laredo reclaimed the remainder. Laredo Junior College occupies a portion of the latter.



Hospital Steward's Quarters – Built 1885



The italicized notes above are once again from the Texas State Historical Association website. They have a lot of info on most items of interest.

I did call a couple museums this morning, the Republic of Texas is without power and closed at least through this week, and she mentioned museums, plural, so I think she is including the other three in the same area; I can't get my call answered at the Water Museum.

I will keep trying to find things to see here in Laredo the next couple days I think. This is one of the warmer spots on the map and no precip is forecast.

I did not stay in the college parking lot, there was still very poor wifi and the laptop could not connect. I drove the back roads to WalMart, which is in a very large shopping complex. As I pulled in I noticed several semis far to my right. Checking it out I found five trucks parked in the empty lot of a twelve screen theater building. The wifi is good so I think I'll park here for the night. A few more trucks have pulled in since I arrived.

My waste tanks are mostly empty, my water is at about two-thirds, propane was filled yesterday, I bought a family pack of Pecan Swirls at Walmart and I have plenty of other foods to last for several days. It won't be the healthiest, no veggies (I had my last of my romaine last night), but I can survive a good week right here.

Hey, there is an art gallery/museum in town, maybe I'll check that out tomorrow.

Morgan lost power this evening in Houston, so Beau and Pax (dogs) will have to keep her warm.

Everybody keep warm.

Until next time.....