A Compendium of Laws

Covering Interests Upon the

Fort Leavenworth Military Reservation

Together With a

History of Its Institutions

and Other Information for the Benefit of Officers, Soldiers and Civilian Employees

By Henry Shindler

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DIVISION VII

Water Supply and Sanitation

The method of supplying water for the garrison was, until 1865, of the most primitive character. It was undoubtedly abreast with the times, and, considering the general lack of facilities at far western posts, these methods were evidently equal to the best in this section. The water was delivered in barrels hauled around the post after having been filled on the banks of the Missouri. An early visitor to the post describes the machinery for supplying the water as follows: "The waterworks consisted of a six-mule team and wagon driven into the edge of the water about hub deep, and in the wagon eight or ten barrels, with the upper head out, set on end. The 'power' was a couple of prisoners from the guard-house, guarded by a sentry with musket and bayonet. One of the prisoners stood on the hub of the wheel, clinging to the top of the wagon box with one hand, while dipping up the water in a large camp kettle with the other, passing it to the other prisoner who stood in the wagon and emptied the water into the open barrels which were not covered to keep the water in; and the water-wagon was doing well if it reached the fort with each barrel two-thirds full. The team was then driven around in rear of the officers' and soldiers' quarters, the prisoners dipping the water out and filling the barrels kept near the back doors for that purpose."

In 1865, through the efforts of Colonel J. A. Potter, the depot quartermaster, steps were taken to improve the method for supplying the garrison with

water. A pumping station was erected on the bank of the river, about a quarter of a mile north of the high bridge spanning the stream. With this steam pump the water was forced to a large tank, having a capacity of 21,000 gallons, situated near the highest point of elevation in the garrison. This tank stood little east of Scott avenue and south of Pope Hall. The post was then supplied with two water-wagons, the bed being built in a long box shape to which were attached eight mules and the water hauled to all the quarters in the post. The tank was provided with an automatic attachment to cause the pump to do its duty or afford it relief according to the quantity of water in the tank. Cisterns were placed at numerous points in the post, in fact every set of officers' quarters was supplied with one for the storage of water and in season of draught were filled from the tank by hose. Unless the roof and guttering of quarters were kept clean of organic matter the result often was a contamination of the water in the cistern.

As the sanitary conditions were equally bad at the post General Pope, commanding the Department of the Missouri, appointed a board of officers in 1874 to consist of Major Glover Perin, medical director; Surgeon T. A. McParlin, post surgeon; and Major J. J. Dana, depot quartermaster, to make a thorough investigation of its sanitary condition. (The sinks throughout the garrison consisted of vaults dug in the rear of all habitable buildings, which, when they became too foul were filled up and new ones dug.) The board made strong recommendations, but as water was not abundant it was evident to the members that their views could not obtain, nor did until some ten years later.

General Pope's action in convening the board was based largely upon a report submitted by Surgeon McParlin to the following effect:

"Considering the importance, the size, and the character, as an established post having been occupied since 1827, and also the greater security in case of fire, it may be regarded as a matter of surprise and regret that the water supply has not been made adequate to all needs and emergencies. For the want of it, cesspits and cesspools continue to honeycomb and saturate the soil, and drainage is imperfect. On this account, except in summer, bathing facilities for all the men cannot be supplied—inasmuch as the water has to be hauled in quantity only available by water wagons. Indeed very few of the officers—and those of high rank—have proper facilities for hot and cold water supplied in a bath room for themselves or their families. Officers of moderate means cannot afford to purchase expensive copper boilers and bathroom fixtures and then, turned out of quarters by a senior officer, remove them to another set.

"The expenditure by government of a sum adequate to give a constant supply of water, and the purchase of necessary fixtures, and appliances for baths would be a great and salutary improvement and raise this extensive and important command nearer the plane of health and the sanitary standard attained at other stations in the army and navy."

The post's modern system of water supply was secured by Captain Lafayette E. Campbell, assistant quartermaster. This officer came here from San Antonio, Texas, in 1883, and at once set to work to secure a change, from primitive to modern sanitary conditions. Within one year the mains of the Leavenworth City and Fort Leavenworth Water Company were laid along Grant avenue to the post and contract entered into with this company to furnish the water. The sanitary conditions received equal attention and to Colonel Otis, 20th Infantry, belongs the credit for the construction of the post sewerage system. Of course, the system has been greatly extended and improved but a number of the trunk lines are today as they were originally laid down by him.

Under the contract referred to it is provided that the company furnish and lay on the reservation 9,000 feet of standard 8-inch cast iron pipe to a depth of four feet and that for said work the company should be paid $11,500 and the property thereafter to belong to the United States. It was further stipulated that for the supply of water for use in the post the company be paid a rental of $500 per month. The right to renew the contract annually for twenty years was reserved, except in case of a material increase of consumption, and then to be paid at a rate to be agreed upon between the department commander and the company. The contract is signed by Major James Gillis, chief quartermaster and Len T. Smith, president of the water company. This contract is as follows:

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT entered into at Fort Leavenavenworth, Kansas, this.....day of June, 1884, by and between Major James Gillis, Quartermaster, U. S. Army, Chief Quartermaster Department of the Missouri, party of the first part, and L. T. Smith, of Leavenworth City, Kansas, President of the Leavenworth City & Fort Leavenworth Water Company, acting in his own behalf, and also as president, duly appointed and qualified, of said Leavenworth City & Fort Leavenworth Water Company, an incorporated company of the said state of Kansas, party of the second part:

THIS AGREEMENT WITNESSETH, that the said party of the first part, for and in behalf of the United States of America, and the said party of the second part, for and in his own behalf, and as President as aforesaid for and in behalf of said Leavenworth City & Fort Leavenworth Water Company have mutually agreed, and by these presents do mutually agree to and with each other as follows, namely:

ARTICLE I. That the said party of the second part shall furnish and lay on the military reservation at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, nine thousand (9000) feet of standard—eight (8) inch cast iron water pipe now in use on said military reservation. The pipe to be laid four (4) feet deep, and all work to be perfect in every respect, and subject to inspection by the depot quartermaster at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

ARTICLE II. That for and in consideration of the faithful performance of the stipulations of this agreement, the party of the second part shall be paid at the office of the depot quartermaster the sum of eleven thousand and five hundred ($11,500.00) dollars.

ARTICLE III. It is expressly understood by the parties to this agreement that upon the acceptance of the pipe, and payment made therefor, the said nine thousand (9000) feet of pipe shall be the property of the United States, and that thereafter a contract shall be entered in for the supply of water on the Military reservation at Fort Leavenworth, at a monthly rental of five hundred ($500.00) dollars, and that the United States shall have the right to renew the said contract annually for twenty years, at a rental of five hundred ($500.00) dollars per month, except in case of material increase of consumption and then to be paid at a rate to be agreed upon between the department commander and the Water Company.

In witness whereof, the undersigned have hereunto subscribed their names and affixed their names the day and the date first above written.

JAMES GILLIS,
Major and Quartermaster, U. S. Army,
Chief Quartermaster, Department of the Missouri.

L. T. SMITH,
President, Leavenworth City and
Fort Leavenworth Water Company.

In the early days of the present reconstruction period Colonel William Cary Sanger, Acting Secretary of War, and General W. H. Carter, visited the post for the purpose of investigating the advisibility of installing government water works. The scheme met with the approval of Secretary Root and funds were made available. Engineers were employed to make the necessary surveys and a full report of the cost submitted.

It was intended to place the reservoir upon the highest point on the bluffs west of the post. This step, however, met with serious opposition from the private company, which, through its directors residing in the East, made use of influence at their com-

mand to prevent this proposed improvement. The department, however, refused to relent until it wrung from the company not only concessions of a favorable kind, but secured a great improvement in the quality of the water thereafter furnished.

On July 1, 1907, a new contract was entered into with the Company to run for eighteen years, the right, however, being reserved by the United States to withdraw from it at any time, upon due and sufficient notice. This contract is on file in the office of the quartermaster.