

related from a study provided by the National Archives, Washington, D. C. //  
Mrs. Hugh Brown, about 1962, and from other sources, See bibliography.

CAMP SAN FELIPE DEL RIO, OR CAMP DEL RIO  
by Mrs. Hugh Brown,  
Mrs. Louita D. Wilson,  
and others

There is a strong local tradition in Del Rio, Texas, that a military outpost of the national government existed at San Felipe Springs in 1857. Perhaps that is true, but to this date no documentary proof has been found. Since there was a valuable and well-known water source there, however, it is highly likely that military patrols did camp there intermittently. Beginning in the late 1840s, parties traveling to the California gold fields and elsewhere needed protection from time to time. Hostile Indians sometimes tried to deny such travelers access to water, so the intermittent presence of the military would certainly have been appropriate. The tradition has it that the <sup>alleged</sup> camp of 1857 originated as a sub-post of Fort Clark, which was established 32 miles to the eastward in 1852, and would have been sending out its patrols quite regularly, as a part of its operation in defense of the Southwest Texas frontier.

Civilian population in the area of San Felipe del Rio was almost non-existent in the 1850s. There was a transient occupancy known as El Salto or Las Sapas -- "sapas is the original Spanish word for underground shelter". Its housing was flimsy indeed, consisting of "holes dug in the ground, these covered with branches, brush and mud to form roofs. The occupants were "Mexicans using this as a stepping stone into other, well-established communities, [and it] never experienced any growth...."<sup>1</sup>



By 1869 they had measures, including irrigated agriculture. . . . built a dam to impound irrigation water, and . . . cultivating profitable fields in the fertile valleys.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Frontier conditions still prevailed, however, with Comanches, Apaches and other hostiles invading the area from time to time. When civilians have made investments and there is pressure brought to bear for the ~~XXXXXX~~ protection of those investments, the United States government often responds to the pressure.

In the case of ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ regular -- rather than intermittent -- military protection for the irrigation works, the farming, and the growing hamlet of San Felipe del Rio, it appears that the civilians worked out an amicable agreement with Federal officers.

(affirmative)  
The ~~XXXXX~~ documentation of earliest date comes from the National Archives of the United States. A summary of the matter reveals that

~~On February 15, 1878, General [E. O. C.] Ord, in forwarding an offer of Mr. John Twohig to sell to the U. S. the land occupied by the post of Fort Duncan remarks that 'a new post is being built at San Felipe on ground granted for nothing',~~

~~The Quartermaster General was apprehensive that once buildings had been constructed at any new post, "rent will be claimed" soon afterward. However he did not veto the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ San Felipe~~

~~in Washington~~  
~~from the year 1876, there had been a military camp at San Felipe Springs. Apparently this was at first regarded as a temporary or improvised installation, because for two years little or no building was done.~~

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ General E. O. C. Ord, commanding general of the Military Department of Texas from 1875 to 1881, mentioned ~~in~~ that on March 1, 1876, he had ~~telegraphed~~ decided ~~to draw cavalry~~ ~~from Fort Griffin and two companies from Fort Concho~~ with the approval of the Division Commander to post cavalry at or near old Fort Hudson and at San Felipe because the Mexican Indians were

Camp Del Rio, Texas 1876 - 1891  
(formerly Camp San Felipe 1876 - 1881)

This Post was established as Camp San Felipe September 6, 1876 pursuant to Special Order No. 160, Department of Texas Series 1876. The need for the Post as explained by General <sup>Edward Otho Cresap</sup> Ord, Commanding General, Dept. of Texas on March 1, 1876 was due to the Mexican Indians increasing raids into the United States, particularly at the mouths of the Pecos River and Devils River, to run horses back into Mexico.<sup>1</sup> The name was changed to Camp Del Rio, described as a sub-post of Fort Clark, under Special Orders No. 9 issued March 18, 1881 by Military Division of the Gulf at New Orleans, Louisiana.

It is significant to note that the name change took place soon after the San Felipe Agricultural, Manufacturing & Irrigation Co. (hereafter referred to as SFAM&I Co. ) had given to the United States the 407.93 acres for use as a Military Reservation on April 18, 1880.<sup>2</sup> The SFAM&I Co. was established in 1868<sup>3</sup> with the original shareholders being the five men who founded Del Rio. Undoubtedly these men, being the donors of the land, insisted the name change be made since they were most desirous of establishing the town name Del Rio.

The 407.93 acres ( a portion of the historic James Mitchell Survey # 163) given by the SFAM&I Co. was originally intended to comprise the entire Reservation. Later it was found that some of the buildings e.g. officers quarters, soldier's barracks, guardhouse, stables and corrals had inadvertently been built off the ceded land on private property known as Survey #184 which totalled 2,391.5 acres owned by a John Twohig and Beauregard heirs.

This occupation of private property caused considerable litigation which was finally settled by the U.S. Government paying John Twohig and the Beauregard heirs \$1511.70 for lease of the entire 2,391.5 acres from September 6, 1876 to June 30, 1885. Thereafter the lease was to be at an annual rate of \$239.15 (July 1 to June 30 at 10¢ an acre) until terminated.<sup>4</sup>

The Post was abandoned officially May 8, 1891 but actually no troops were stationed there after January 1890 except for a small detachment sent in summer of 1890 to inventory all existing buildings.<sup>5</sup> The 407.93 acres was transferred back to the original owners May 19, 1896.<sup>6</sup>

Footnotes attached.

*Ed. H. H. H.*  
Cynthia V. Blatte  
June 24, 1980.

Camp Del Rio Footnotes

1. Page 2 Paragraph 3 beginning "on March 1, 1876 .... " Report on Camp Del Rio from National Archives enclosed.
2. Deed Records Kinney County, Texas Vol. A No. 3 pp 461, 462.
3. Rules, Regulations and By Laws of S.F.A.M. & I Co. Deed Records Val Verde County, Texas Vol. 71 pp 580-582.
4. Pages 5 (all) and 6 to "End of page 6 of old report". Report on Camp Del Rio from National Archives enclosed.
5. Page 6 & 7 "Beginning of Page 7 of old report" Ibid..
6. Page 7 - Handwritten note - Ibid.

  
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Historical Commission

June 24, 1980.