In 1936, the Texas Centennial Commission purchased the surviving fort buildings and surrounding 41 acres. The site was turned over to the City of Jacksboro and the Jack County Historical Society to maintain. Fort Richardson became a National Historic Landmark in 1964. Five years later, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department assumed operation of the post. Today the park offers over 70 campsites, multiple hiking trails, a swimming beach, and more!

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department works to preserve this historic site while maintaining and interpreting the frontier character of this Texas fort. You have a part to play in assuring this cultural and natural resource endures. Do not remove artifacts from the park and help preserve natural surroundings by staying on trails and throwing away trash.

FURTHER READING
The Indian Trial by Charles Robinson, University of Oklahoma Press, 2015.
Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History by S. C. Gwynne, Simon & Schuster, 2011.

Fort Richardson State Park, Historic Site and Lost Creek Reservoir State Trailway
228 State Park Road 61, Jacksboro, Texas 76458
(940) 567-3506 • www.tpwd.texas.gov/fortrichardson

THE RED RIVER FRONTIER AND THE TEXAS PANHANDLE WERE WILD, UNCERTAIN PLACES IN THE EARLY 1870S. NATIVE AMERICANS, CHIEFLY KIOWA AND COMANCHE, SAW THEIR WAY OF LIFE UNDER ATTACK. THE UNITED STATES ARMY, SENT TO PROTECT SETTLERS AND AMERICAN INTERESTS, DROVE NATIVE GROUPS FROM THEIR HOMELANDS ONTO PERMANENT RESERVATIONS.

BETWEEN 1867 AND 1875, SOUTHERN PLAINS TRIBES AND U.S. CAVALRY CLASHED ON THE NORTHERN TEXAS FRONTIER. FORT RICHARDSON WAS A KEY POST IN THIS STRUGGLE.

LOST CREEK TRAIL
Fort Richardson State Park and Historic Site is not only steeped in history, but rich in natural wonders as well. Multi-use trails within the park provide an opportunity to travel through beautiful prairie habitat, home to many species of birds including northern bobwhite, Western meadowlark, and American kestrel. Overnight visitors may hear the gentle rustle of armadillos as they forage for insects and grubs, and coyotes may sing at dawn and dusk. You may even have a group of wild turkeys pass you on the trail.

The Lost Creek Reservoir State Trailway connects Fort Richardson’s main park to its satellite park nestled on the shore of Lake Jacksboro. The 9-mile trail follows the creek, traveling the east side of Lake Jacksboro before crossing the dam at Lost Creek Reservoir. The trail casually winds along the terrain and offers cool, shaded spots to rest beneath pecan and oak trees. Look for great blue herons, kingfishers, and even osprey hunting fish in Lake Jacksboro. Enjoy a cool swim after your hike and as you relax on the beach, close your eyes and imagine this natural oasis as it was at the time of the first settlers.

FORT RICHARDSON STATE PARK AND HISTORIC SITE

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FORT RICHARDSON STATE PARK AND HISTORIC SITE

of his people, and lay to regain the confidence ability as a warrior. In order question his leadership and talks led some in his tribe to people, but failed peace peaceful resolution for his Chief, attempted to secure a Kicking Bird, a Kiowa battle at the Little Wichita River in July 1870. bloody battles; one of the most notable was the fierce On occasion, these retaliatory raids and patrols became frontier settlements. In response, the U.S. government sent Other tribes resisted relocation and fought back. Their Relocated tribes, however, became frustrated by confine-ment, inadequate supplies, and failed treaty promises. Other tribes resisted relocation and fought back. Their warriors crossed the Red River into Texas and terrorized frontier settlements. In response, the U.S. government sent additional Army personnel to protect these communities. On occasion, these retaliatory raids and patrols became bloody battles; one of the most notable was the fierce battle at the Little Wichita River in July 1870. Kicking Bird, a Kiowa Chief, attempted to secure a peaceful resolution for his people, but failed peace talks led some in his tribe to question his leadership and ability as a warrior. In order to regain the confidence of his people, and lay to rest any suggestions of cowardice, Kicking Bird led warriors into Texas. Against his orders, a small group of young warriors attacked a civilian mail stagecoach. Fort Richardson dispersed 59 troopers of the 6th Cavalry Regiment, led by Captain McLellan, to locate and fight the Kiowa responsible for the attack. After tracking the raiders for five days, the troops found the Kiowa camp. McLellan’s troops soon realized the band outnumbered them by more than two to one. The battle lasted into the early evening, with the Kiowa attacking from all sides. Finally, the Kiowas cut off their attack and the exhausted troops prepared a retreat. Despite the long battle, the 6th Cavalry only lost three soldiers and 18 horses; 11 men were wounded. The Kiowa reportedly lost 15 men. Later, Captain McLellan praised Kicking Bird for his leadership in the battle and requested more men to protect the frontier. The army awarded McLellan’s unit with 18 Medals of Honor, the most ever awarded for a single battle. Four years later in 1874, the conflict between U.S. Army troops and the plains Native Americans would come to an end in the Battle of Palo Duro. Led by Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie, the army dealt a decisive blow to the Comanche, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa and forced the tribes permanently onto reservations. This final battle ended the period of fighting known as the Red River War. Comanches, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa and forced the tribes permanently onto reservations. This final battle ended the period of fighting known as the Red River War. 

Life was hard for soldiers at a frontier fort. The men made long, difficult patrols along the frontier, sometimes trekking all the way to Palo Duro Canyon, 300 miles away. They guarded the military road connecting them with forts to the southwest, and helped local law officers keep the peace in the nearby town of Jacksboro. The post hospital, completed in 1870, dominates the fort’s parade grounds. At the time, the imposing hospital was the most modern building between Fort Worth and El Paso. Yet soldiers said that one’s chances of survival were better in battle than being admitted to the hospital. More men died from diseases than from battle wounds. Highest on the list of medical complaints were illnesses caused by bad water and spoiled food. Other common ailments included alcoholism and venereal diseases contracted during visits to nearby dens of iniquity.

After the Battle of Palo Duro, the Texas frontier was relatively secure, and the soldiers at Fort Richardson were no longer needed. Orders to abandon of Fort Richardson were issued March 29, 1878. The 55 buildings, including a morgue, bakery, magazine, commissary, and commanding officer’s quarters were soon sold, scavenged, and fell into disrepair.

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Kicking Bird later regretted his use of violence and devoted the rest of his life to working with Americans and seeking peace for his people.