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 U.S. Army named Fort Richardson in honor of General Israel B. Richardson, a veteran of the Seminole, Indian and Mexican Wars, who fought for the Union and died in the Civil War in 1862. Frontier forts played a critical role during Reconstruction and the Indian Wars, when troops were tasked with the job of subduing the plains Native Americans and forcing them onto reservations north of the Red River.

Established in 1867, Fort Richardson was the northernmost post of a line of forts stretching from the Rio Grande to the Red River.

Relocated tribes, however, became frustrated by confinement, 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 and bring those responsible to trial. On occasion, these retaliatory raids and patrols became bloody battles; one of the fiercest was the 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. To regain the confidence of his people, Kicking Bird led warriors into Texas in 1870. 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.

The 6th Cavalry tracked down the Kiowa and attacked, despite being outnumbered two to one. McLellan only lost three soldiers and eleven were wounded before retreating, while the Kiowa reportedly lost fifteen men. 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, including civilian James B. Dosher, with 18 Medals of Honor.

In 1871, The U.S. Army held Kiowa Chiefs Satanta and Big Tree at Fort Richardson for leading a raid known as the Warren Wagon Train Massacre. These chiefs became the first Native Americans tried in Texas Civil Court and their guilty verdict shifted public opinion to support offensive western advancement.

Three 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 Col. Mackenzie, the army dealt a decisive blow to the Comanche, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa, forcing the tribes permanently onto reservations. This final battle effectively ended the Red River War.

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.

Fort Richardson State Park and Historic Site

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