

Arkansas Military History Journal

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WHERE HISTORY MOVES FORWARD:

A NEW 3-D INTERACTIVE EXHIBIT AND THE FIRST-
OF-ITS-KIND MUSTER PAINTING.



This image is a mock-up illustrating the future renovation of a new exhibit space, showcasing the museum's vision for an immersive and educational environment.

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Arkansas Non-profit Corporation

Museum Hours

Monday—Friday

08:00 to 15:00

www.arngmuseum.com

10:00 to 14:00

Most Drill Weekends

Message from the Director

This is an exciting time for the Arkansas National Guard Museum. The Museum was awarded a grant for \$975,882 by the Arkansas Natural & Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC) to begin the process of implementing our project the "Arkansas Militia/National Guard Heritage Exhibit." The ARNG Museum received a grant two years ago from the ANCRC to design the exhibit. That was completed last year, and the first article in this journal covers the design.

Earlier in 2026, the Museum commissioned a painting depicting the first militia muster in what became Arkansas in 1780. COL (ret) Damon Cluck explains that process. The first muster took place at Arkansas Post and the third article is a reprint of one published in the Fall 1993 issue covering the Post during the American Revolutionary War.

Dr. Raymond Screws

Editor/Arkansas National Guard Museum Director

501-435-2400; raymond.screws@arkansas.gov



A NEW ERA FOR OUR MUSEUM IS TAKING SHAPE

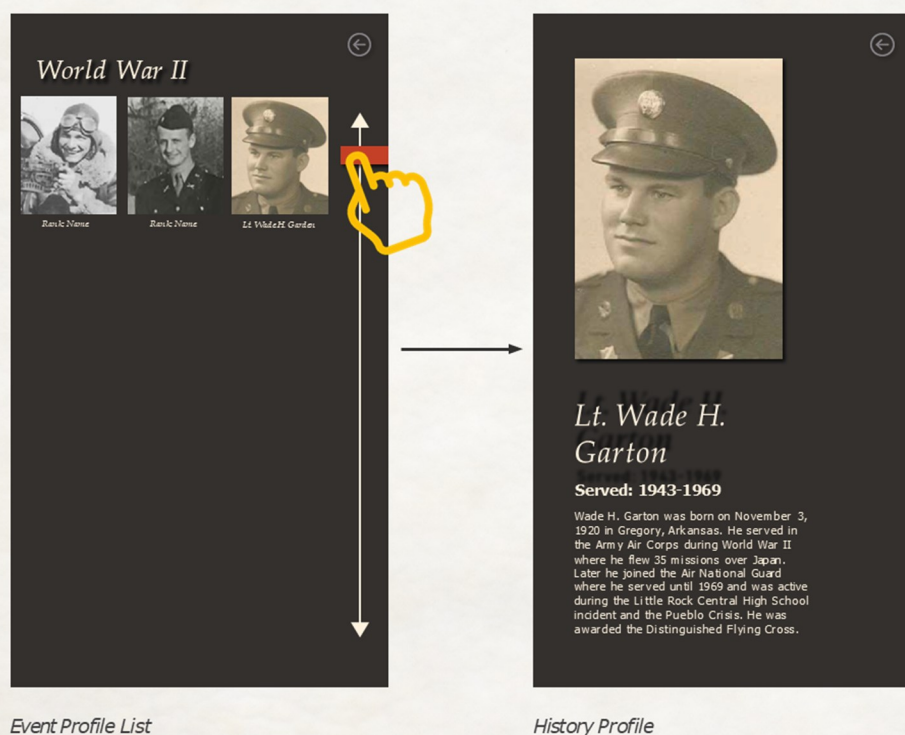
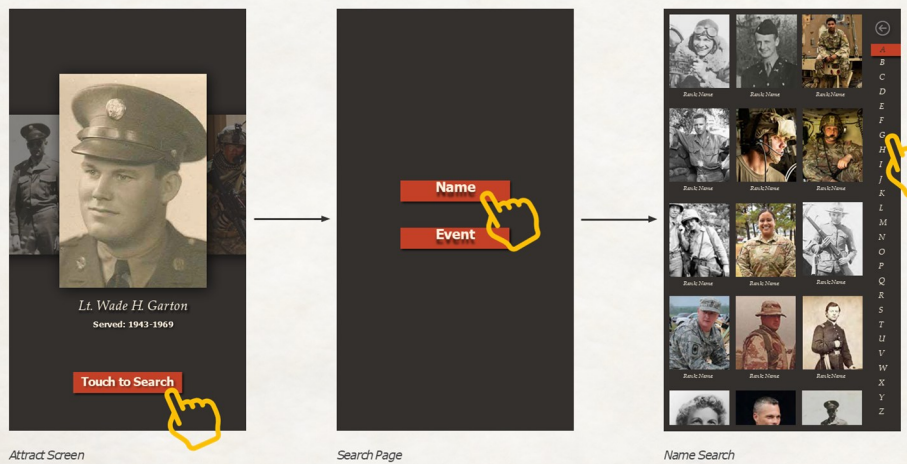
Compiled by Brittany Edwards

For decades, the Arkansas National Guard Museum has worked diligently to preserve and share not only the military history of our state, but also the broader story of Arkansas itself. The Guard has played an essential role in shaping the Natural State, protecting its people, supporting our communities in times of need, and contributing to the identity we know today. Within the museum's walls, we carry the responsibility of telling that story through carefully curated artifacts, photographs, and documents entrusted to us by Arkansas National Guard members and their families. Whether donated or placed on loan, each item is safeguarded so that future generations can learn from the service and sacrifice of those who came before.

Visitors who have explored the museum know our commitment to sharing this history as fully as possible. Yet, like many institutions, we have long faced limitations in funding and resources that have shaped the way we are able to present our narrative. This past year, however, marked a turning point. The museum team, in collaboration with the design firm ROTO, has been working tirelessly toward a goal that once felt out of reach: creating an immersive, interactive 3D exhibit space that brings the Arkansas National Guard story to life in new and dynamic ways.

This year, the museum presented its vision to a review board and was awarded a significant grant to begin moving this ambitious project forward. While this funding represents only a portion of what will ultimately be needed, it is a major milestone—one that opens the door to innovation, improved accessibility, and expanded educational outreach. In the coming years, visitors will see the museum transform as these plans take shape. The designs featured in this issue offer a glimpse of what is ahead. As the project develops, we invite you to follow our progress on social media and at arngmuseum.com, where you can already explore a virtual walkthrough of the upcoming exhibit and view artifacts that will be featured in the new space. We are excited for what the future holds and hope you will visit soon to experience this evolving chapter in our mission of preservation, education, and service.





The history database invites visitors to connect personally with the stories of Arkansas National Guard members by offering an easy-to-explore, touchscreen timeline filled with biographies, photos, quotes, and key moments from Guard history. Whether visitors choose to search by name or by event, the database guides them through meaningful stories showing who these individuals were, what they experienced, and how they contributed to both the Guard and the broader community. By tapping on different entries, visitors can discover the people behind major events, learn about their service, and see how each individual fits into the larger narrative of the Arkansas National Guard. This interactive experience makes the museum feel more alive and approachable, helping every visitor, be it a family member, historian, or curious guest, walk away with a deeper, more personal understanding of the Guard's legacy.

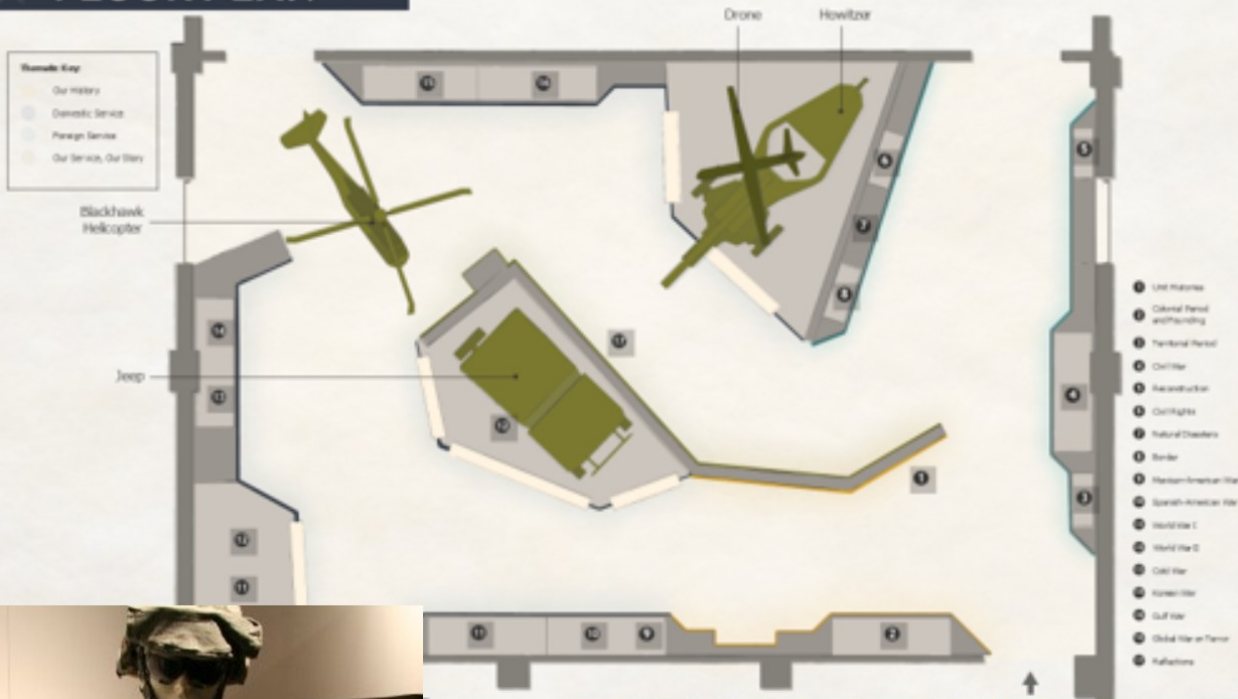




This interactive display invites visitors to literally get hands-on with history by flipping and turning a series of double-sided frames that reveal hidden stories, surprising details, and fresh perspectives on the National Guard. Each of the nine frames turns smoothly, encouraging guests to explore at their own pace and discover reverse images, additional context, or new angles on familiar artifacts all without risking any fragile materials, since the graphics are reproductions designed specifically for visitor interaction. This simple, power-free experience allows the museum's imagery and artifacts to come alive in an engaging, tactile way, offering a more memorable and personal connection to the Guard's past.



★ FLOOR PLAN



This audio experience allows visitors to hear directly from National Guard members as they share personal stories, memories, and moments from their service. Scattered throughout the gallery, each “Voices” station features an audio handset paired with graphics that highlight the individual or event connected to the recording. When visitors pick up a handset, the audio begins automatically, offering an immediate, intimate connection to the speaker’s story; once the handset is placed back on its magnetic base, the audio stops. The recordings will continually loop, encouraging visitors to listen as long as they like. Together, these stations create a powerful and accessible way for guests to engage with the lived experiences preserved in the museum’s collections, adding depth, emotion, and humanity to the National Guard’s history.



Creating History on Canvas: The Research Behind the First Muster Painting

Historical paintings do more than illustrate the past—they shape how future generations visualize it. Their value depends not only upon artistic talent but also upon careful research, thoughtful interpretation, and a willingness to refine every detail in light of historical evidence. The creation of *The First Muster of the Militia at Arkansas Post, 10 July 1780* exemplifies this process.

The painting commemorates the earliest documented formal organization of militia forces in what is now Arkansas. On July 10, 1780, under the authority of Commandant Balthazar de Villiers, eighty-seven men assembled at Arkansas Post to be organized into two militia companies. Conducted during the American Revolutionary War under Spanish colonial rule, the muster represented an important milestone in the military history of Arkansas while illustrating the multicultural frontier society that defended Spain's northern frontier.

Rather than simply commissioning a historical painting, the Arkansas National Guard Museum sought to create a visual interpretation grounded in documentary evidence and capable of withstanding scholarly review. The result combines historical research, artistic craftsmanship, and collaboration among historians, museum professionals, the Quapaw Nation, and the artist.

The Painting

The painting portrays the first recorded militia muster held at Arkansas Post on July 10, 1780, outside Fort San Carlos III, the principal Spanish military and administrative post in Upper Louisiana. Set on a hot, humid summer morning along the Arkansas River, the scene captures not only a military formation but also an important civic event attended by soldiers, settlers, militia officers, and Quapaw allies.

Although the muster had a festive public character, it was prompted by genuine military concerns. Spain had entered the American Revolutionary War as an ally of the American colonies, and Commandant Balthazar de Villiers was aware of the threat posed by British-aligned forces under Captain James Colbert. Arkansas Post and Fort San Carlos III occupied an exposed position on Spain's northern frontier, making local defense an urgent responsibility.

The July 10, 1780 muster therefore served two purposes. Militarily, it organized the settlement's men into companies capable of supporting the Spanish garrison in the event of attack. Socially, it became one of the most important public gatherings in the small frontier community. The villagers—men, women, and children—turned out to witness the proceedings, lending the occasion a festive atmosphere even as the serious work of organizing the colony's defense unfolded before them.

Standing at the far right of the composition is Commandant Balthazar de Villiers, commander of Arkansas Post and the officer who ordered the muster. Dressed in the white and blue uniform of the Fixed Regiment of Louisiana, he observes the proceedings while exercising the authority of the Spanish Crown on its northern frontier.

Directing the training is Sergeant Alexo Pastor, likewise wearing the uniform of the Fixed Regiment of Louisiana. As the senior non-commissioned officer of the garrison, Pastor instructs the newly organized militia in drill and formation. His inclusion is especially significant because he would later distinguish himself during the successful defense of Fort San Carlos III during the Colbert Raid of 1783.

The Painting Cont.

Nearby stand the newly appointed militia leaders: Lieutenant Don Luis Boulard, Sub-Lieutenant Don Guillermo Cruks (William Crooks), and Sergeant First Class Francisco Menard. They are depicted in the distinctive uniforms of Spanish colonial militia officers, setting them apart from both the Spanish regulars and the enlisted militia. Their presence symbolizes the transformation of Arkansas Post's civilian population into an organized military force under Spanish authority.

The militia volunteers themselves appear as ordinary frontiersmen. Merchants, farmers, hunters, voyageurs, and craftsmen stand together carrying their own muskets, trade guns, powder horns, knives, and other personal equipment. Their varied clothing and weapons emphasize that this is a citizen militia rather than a professional army.

Gathered around the formation are the residents of Arkansas Post. Men, women, and children observe the proceedings with curiosity and pride, reminding the viewer that the defense of the settlement depended upon the participation of the entire community. Their presence gives the painting a sense of celebration as well as purpose, illustrating that the first militia muster was both a military necessity and a significant civic occasion.

Prominently positioned near the Spanish command group is Angaska, the principal Quapaw war chief and diplomatic leader associated with Arkansas Post during this period. Accompanied by Quapaw warriors, Angaska represents the longstanding alliance between the Quapaw Nation and the Spanish colonial government.

Behind the assembled participants rises Fort San Carlos III, enclosed by its timber palisades, corner bastions, and frontier buildings. Dense summer vegetation and the humid atmosphere of the Arkansas River valley reinforce the realities of life on Spain's northern frontier. Rather than depicting an idealized military parade, the painting presents a living frontier community preparing together for uncertain times.

Establishing the Historical Framework

The project began with the development of a comprehensive Statement of Work prepared by Dr. Raymond Screws, Director of the Arkansas National Guard Museum, and the author. Rather than serving as a simple commission, the Statement of Work established detailed historical requirements governing every aspect of the painting. It defined the setting, participants, architecture, uniforms, weapons, material culture, and interpretive themes while emphasizing that historical accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and material authenticity were essential objectives of the project.

Artistic interpretation was encouraged, but only within the boundaries established by documentary evidence, transforming the commission into a carefully researched reconstruction intended to meet museum-quality standards.

Collaboration with Subject-Matter Experts

The Statement of Work was reviewed by Stephen L. Kling Jr., Judge Morris S. Arnold, and representatives of the Quapaw Nation before painting began. Their comments refined the interpretation of Spanish military organization, colonial material culture, and the accurate portrayal of Quapaw leadership and appearance. This collaborative review ensured that the finished work reflected the best available historical evidence.

Selecting the Artist

Mitchell Nolte was selected because of his demonstrated expertise in depicting the eighteenth-century Spanish Colonial frontier and his previous historical illustrations associated with Stephen Kling's work. From the beginning, the project anticipated multiple rounds of review. Preliminary sketches and successive drafts were evaluated for both artistic merit and historical accuracy, allowing historians, museum staff, and the artist to work collaboratively throughout the commission.

Refining the Historical Details

Every significant element of the painting underwent careful review. Uniforms, flags, weapons, architecture, civilian clothing, Quapaw material culture, and even the environmental setting were examined and revised as new research and scholarly comments were received. The result is a work whose historical authenticity rests upon countless carefully considered details.

A Painting Built Upon Scholarship

The completed First Muster painting represents far more than an artistic reconstruction. It is the product of historical research, museum practice, scholarly collaboration, and respectful consultation with the Quapaw Nation. By combining disciplined scholarship with artistic craftsmanship, the painting offers viewers a historically grounded vision of one of the formative moments in Arkansas's military heritage and demonstrates how careful research can bring history vividly to life.

Words from Mitchell Nolte

"For the July 10, 1780, Muster piece, the work is hand-drawn using a drawing tablet and pencil concept sketches, followed by working through sections, rendering largely through Artrage which allows for a naturalistic approach, enabling me to apply colour with the same level of friction and density as pencil and oil pastel.

For the scene I chose to represent the various groups coming together, drawn from local inhabitants and refugees of various backgrounds, but primarily French and German, for the Muster with Sgt Pastor instructing them in the manner and purpose of holding their muskets as per drill regulations; something the group are still learning. One of the participants concerns himself with his damaged footwear which was somewhat inspired by my discovery of one of my own shoes disintegrating at the time. This detail also indicates some of the different classes present among the Militia. In the background a girl provides water to another onlooker, while the majority observe the event. Input from various experts and representatives of the Quapaw Nation also informed details regarding the officers present and elements of attire.

Other details researched were regarding the type of bluegrass vegetation, colonial era dog breeds, and bird life (some Wood ducks are present; initially, I took the view that wildlife might avoid human settlements, but at the same time, there was a far greater abundance of birdlife in the natural environments than we are used to nowadays and so wanted to represent in some small way."



STAGE ONE ↑

↓ **STAGE TWO**



STAGE THREE



The painting is almost complete, but there are a few more changes that need to be made. Steve Kling provided his final expert observation. "My research indicates that a white coat of arms flag was flown at all river and coastal forts during the period. It looks like you have the Fixed Regiment of Louisiana flag flying at the fort. We don't know exactly the form, but the authority comes from the naval regulations which we presume means the naval flag. There are various versions in the paintings and drawings. The drawings to the right are from the 1760s and my personal opinion is that the coat of arms would be larger and in the center. Whether or not there were blue or red ribbons too is an open issue. I would suggest leaving them off."

Here is the Completed Painting!



Notice the change to the new flag.

The Role of Arkansas Post in the American Revolution

“The Colbert Incident” Report on the Historical Investigation of ARKANSAS POST Arkansas,

By Ray H. Mattison, Historian
Reprinted from a 1993 Journal



Counterattack! By Sidney E. King

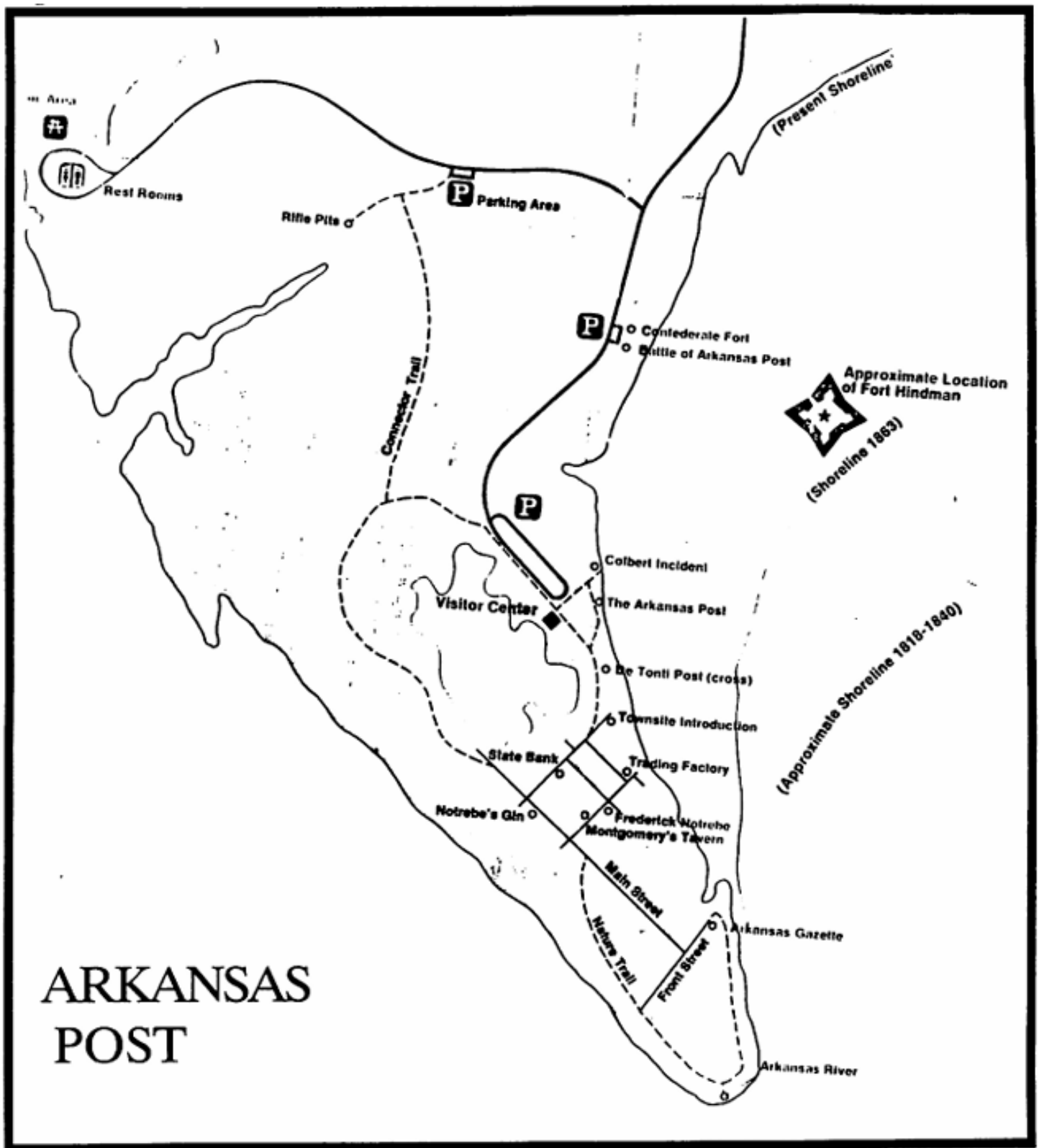
Shows the sally from Fort Carlos III made by Sergeant Alexo Pastor, nine soldiers of the Louisiana regiment, and four Quapaw warriors during the six hour siege of the fort.

The Seven Years War, known as the French and Indian War, formally ended by treaty in 1763 with France ceding the Louisiana Territory to Spain. Spain, after having secretly aided the Patriots for several years, entered the Revolutionary War on the side of the French and Americans in 1779. In the same year British harassment of the Spanish in the Mississippi Valley began. Jean Blommart, leader of the British volunteers, attacked and took Fort Panmure and the settlement of Natchez, Spanish-claimed territory on the east side of the Mississippi River. The town of Pensacola had been taken for the British. The Post of Arkansas, used primarily as a fur trading post by the French, gained new significance under Spanish dominance and was moved approximately thirty-six miles up the Arkansas River. It was located on the southern tip of Arkansas Post National Memorial and called Fort San Carlos III. The new location was established to give protection to Spain's interest west of the Mississippi. When Estevan Miro became Governor of Louisiana in 1781, he set about to pacify the

Indians east of the Mississippi and between Spanish and American territories. Following the Natchez insurrection, a number of rebels fled to the Chickasaw, where they joined with English loyalist and traders of various nationalities. This group united under the leadership of James Colbert, a captain of the British army, who had settled in the Chickasaw country and who had married into that tribe. This group made reprisals against Spanish commerce on the Mississippi. In May 1782, Colbert and his men captured a boat bearing Senora Cruzat, wife of the lieutenant-governor of Spanish Illinois, and her sons. The Spanish endeavored by diplomacy to appease the Chickasaw. Colbert, nevertheless, continued to harass the Spanish. In April 1783, Colbert, at the head of about 100 Englishmen and several Chickasaw, suddenly attacked Arkansas Post. In approaching the Post, the raiding party had found the Arkansas River low and easy to ascend. It had deceived the Quapaw, many of whom were scattered in hunting parties, by traveling up the river by boat and making but little noise.

The English first attacked the village near the fort at 2:30 in the morning when everyone was asleep and captured all the houses. They seized Lieutenant Villars and his family who were temporarily living in the village. The four principal men of the settlement, together with their families, and six others who made up the village, escaped. The wives and children of the absentee hunters fled to the house of the commandant at the fort. The Spanish garrison ran to the lieutenant's house, where the soldiers fought a short battle with the English. Two soldiers were killed and six were captured. A cannon was also taken. The English then attacked the fort, which they could approach within pistol shot without being seen. From three to nine o'clock in the morning, they continued to pour volley after volley from their carbines into the palisades of the fort without effect. The new commandant of the garrison, Jacobo du Briel, then decided to sally forth with his men. At the time, he saw Senora Villiers, wife of the lieutenant, with a flag of truce and bearing a letter to the commandant, and one

of Colbert's men approaching the fort. The letter from the English commander demanded the immediate surrender and informed Du Briel that he had already captured the inhabitants of the village and Lieutenant Villiers and his family. The garrison, shouting loudly, then continued with its sally. The attacking party then began their retreat, taking their prisoners with them to their boats, which were anchored about a league distant, and took several others whom they had seized from the Spanish. They withdrew down the Arkansas River. Later in the day, the Quapaw came to the assistance of the garrison. The chief, Angaska, with a party of Indians and whites, took off in pursuit of Colbert and his men overtook them three leagues below the mouth of Arkansas River. There the chief forced Colbert to release all of the prisoners except three slaves and the son of one of the inhabitants. The English leader later also freed these. By treaties signed in 1782 and 1783, the American Revolutionary War came to an end.



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Located at:

Camp J.T. Robinson

Lloyd England Hall

Building 6400

North Little Rock, AR 72199-9600

Phone: 501-435-2400

dotm.museum@arkansas.gov

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