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*Fort Bascom: Soldiers, Comancheros, and Indians in the Canadian River Valley* by James Bailey Blackshear (review)

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To that end, in 2004, Mahoney and members of the Vernon, Texas, chapter of Rotary International, led a Rotary project to place markers along the Western Trail from Mexico to Canada. *Finding the Great Western Trail* documents this seven-year effort. Mahoney includes engaging and informative historical snapshots of the communities located along the Western as well as pictures and stories of marker dedications by local Rotary clubs.

Mahoney, a former teacher and rodeo coach, founded the Western Heritage Center in Lovington, New Mexico. In *Finding the Great Western Trail*, she has crafted an inspiring story of communities across Texas and North America banding together to help preserve their shared history. The fact that this major undertaking to commemorate and preserve the Western Trail was such a success is a testament to Mahoney and her fellow Rotarians.

*Fort Worth, Texas*

GLEN SAMPLE ELY

*Fort Bascom: Soldiers, Comancheros, and Indians in the Canadian River Valley.*

By James Bailey Blackshear. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016. Pp. 272. Notes, bibliography, index.)

In August 1863, a mixed force of United States regular soldiers and New Mexico volunteers established Fort Bascom, New Mexico, on the south side of the Canadian River about sixty miles west of the Texas border. Named for Capt. George N. Bascom, killed eighteen months earlier at the Battle of Valverde, the post was designed to blunt a possible Confederate invasion of New Mexico and to check the flourishing Comanchero trade between residents of that territory and Southern Plains Indians. Chronic shortages of good drinking water, building materials, fresh meat and vegetables, and forage continually plagued the small military garrisons there (usually only two companies). General William T. Sherman described the region as “an awful country from which to draw men before death” (8). Fort Bascom’s independent status was ended in the summer of 1870, but it would thereafter serve as a sub-post of Fort Union until its permanent closure in 1875.

In this first full study of the post, James Bailey Blackshear makes two significant points. First, he demonstrates that while obviously a part of the history of New Mexico, Fort Bascom also played an important role in the history of Texas. As the closest military position to the western Llano Estacado, it served as a base for big army columns led by Col. Christopher “Kit” Carson (1864), Maj. Andrew W. Evans (1868–69), and Maj. William R. Price (1874) into the heart of Comanchería, campaigns that, in conjunction with soldiers from Kansas, Texas, and Indian Territory, eventually crushed the military power of the Comanches and Kiowas. Even more

significant is Blackshear's skillful analysis of the impact of the Comanchero trade—the generations-old exchange through the well-concealed canyons of the western Canadian River between New Mexicans and Plains Indians of food, sugar, clothing, whiskey, and guns for livestock—on the army and Indian affairs. As Blackshear explains, few Anglos grasped the systematic, deep-seeded nature of this trade, which long eluded both the soldiers assigned to stop it and the newcomers who attempted to seize it for their own.

Highlighted by tenacious archival research, Blackshear's study shows that those interested in nineteenth-century Texas history must incorporate Fort Bascom, which for all practical purposes served as the Lone Star State's "northernmost frontier fort" (159) until the establishment of Fort Elliott in 1875, into their world view. He also shows that military historians of the period must pay greater attention to the Comanchero trade; to paraphrase an old adage, while amateurs discuss tactics, professionals study logistics. Moving beyond the immediacy of Fort Bascom, Blackshear is less sure-footed, as exemplified by his claim that Sherman and General Philip Sheridan applied concepts of total war learned in the Civil War against Indians, notions that scholars like Mark Grimsley and Mark Neely have done much to discredit. Such minor caveats notwithstanding, this is a valuable book that says much more about Texas and the Southwest than the typical history of a frontier fort.

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ROBERT WOOSTER

*The Garden of Eden: The Story of a Freedmen's Community in Texas.* By Drew Sanders. (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2015. Pp. 220. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.)

While many historians have attempted to explore on a large scale what life was like for African Americans from the end of the Civil War until today, Drew Sanders, in his book *The Garden of Eden: The Story of a Freedman's Community in Texas*, does it on a personal scale, providing a perspective that is often lost in larger works. Sanders tells the tale of his family, and other related families, who settled in a community called Garden of Eden near Fort Worth. He explores the struggles of the community in navigating the Jim Crow era in Texas while also showing the importance of community and self-sufficiency to survival and prosperity for African American communities in the South.

Sanders is a member of this community. He brings first-hand knowledge of the subject to his work while adding an emotional element that shows how important a community like Garden of Eden is to its members. He begins with the Loyds, who were brought to the area as slaves before the Civil War, then weaves in the stories of others, such as the Cheneys