

Fort Bowie

Think of trying to cross the dry Arizona desert on foot or horseback. One thing becomes instantly clear: you'd need water. Travelers crossing this area on horseback in the 1800's were forced to establish campsites close to water sources - they moved from spring to spring in order to stay hydrated and to keep their horses healthy. The spring at Apache Pass was one of the watering holes that Americans and Indians relied on and enjoyed. The mountain views offered a brief respite for a weary traveler worn down by the desert landscape. If you were traveling this way on horseback instead of by train, this spring would offer a welcome break from the rough days of travel.

In 1862, the U.S. Army established Fort Bowie in order to better protect Anglo settlers in the region. This location offered the military an important stronghold in the Apache-occupied Arizona territory. But, unlike the relationship between the traveler and the spring, Americans and Apaches did not live peacefully.

The Chiricahua Apaches made many raids against the Anglo-American settlers and eventually ambushed Union soldiers on their way to battle a confederate regiment. As a result, a heavier pursuit of Apache leaders was called for, and in 1886, the Chiricahua Apaches surrendered, rendering Fort Bowie unnecessary.

Fort Bowie now stands as a window into history. As a site of the National Park Service, Fort Bowie gives visitors a chance to visit this important historical rest-stop. The experience takes visitors on a path to view the Fort Bowie ruins, a Butterfield Stage Coach Station, and even the spring at Apache Pass.

Source(s):

www.nps.gov/fobo

www.discoverseaz.com/Attractions/Bowie.htm

www.legendsofamerica.com/AZ-FortBowie.htm

Author(s):

Written by William Lufburrow (Undergraduate Student) and edited by Susan G. Scott (Lecturer) in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University, as part of a National Park Service Trails and Rails project funded by Amtrak, 2009.