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## Exhibit highlights Army's role in Park Service history

The Frontier Army Museum commemorates the centennial of the National Park Service with special exhibit.

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The Frontier Army Museum is commemorating the centennial of the National Park Service with an exhibit that highlights the U.S. Army's significant role in the establishment and creation of national parks.

Historic images and equipment like that used by soldiers to create the national parks are among the featured exhibit items from the museum's collection. The new exhibit is free and open to the Fort Leavenworth community, schools, tour groups and the general public.

National parks and the Army have historically strong ties that go back to the establishment of Yellowstone as the world's first national park in 1872. Consequently, the U.S. Cavalry was tasked to watch over American national parks. Soldiers also served as the first park rangers until the National Park Service was formally created 44 years later. During World War II, some of the national parks were also set aside for the purpose of the "training and care" of military personnel. Today, several national parks commemorate military battles and achievements.

"The Army was utilized to stabilize and protect the resources within the parks. Soldiers stopped illegal poaching, fought forest fires, built roads and built forts," said Megan Hunter, museum specialist and collections manager at Frontier Army Museum. In addition to creating unique displays, Hunter's duties include protecting and caring for the 7,000 items in the museum's collection. She says that it took the museum staff two months to research and develop the new temporary exhibit.

The largest display case within the centennial celebration exhibit contains uniform items and historic photographs, including a photograph of Buffalo Soldiers mounted on bicycles in Yellowstone National Park.

Hunter explained that the use of bicycles was a test to see if horses could be replaced with bicycles. And among the extensive field trials, in 1896 seven men of the 25th Infantry rode bicycles on a 790-mile round trip between Fort Missoula, Mont., and Yellowstone.

"Inside the largest display area, we have a pair of 1886 gauntlets. We have two campaign hats — an older version from 1889 and the other hat is from 1911 — both with black and gold cords. The cords designate U.S. Cavalry," Hunter said. "The blue sack coat is displayed with a sidearm holster and cavalry belt. A pair of leather cavalry riding boots completes the uniform. All of these items are originals and from our museum collection."

As a government agency, the National Park Service has more than 20,000 employees whose mission is to preserve the National Park System for the current and future generations. More than 275 million people visit the parks annually. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout the United States and the rest of the world.

Within two years of the NPS being established, Army soldiers completely finished their duty assignment with national parks. Fort Yellowstone has since served as Yellowstone National Park headquarters.

"The Army uniform of that period was the primary model that was later used by park rangers for what would ultimately be their own standard uniforms. Many people typically visualize park rangers wearing what we call a Montana Peak hat, which was a common Army uniform item then," Hunter said.

The Frontier Army Museum collects and preserves items used to tell the story of the Frontier Army from 1804 to 1916 and Fort Leavenworth from 1827 to the present day. Officially recognized as an Army museum in 1960, the museum preserves one of the largest collections of 19th century military artifacts in the country.

The museum is free and open to the public. Hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. The museum is closed Sundays, Mondays and federal holidays.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Frontier Army Museum visitor Robert Benavides, physical security specialist at Regional Health Command - Central in Texas on a staff assistant visit to Fort Leavenworth, photographs museum displays just beyond a temporary exhibit that highlights the Army's early role with the National Park Service Nov. 17 at the FAM. Benavides said he visits museums whenever he visits other posts. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp