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Bus safari tours post's historic sites

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Christopher Burnett | Staff Writer

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Starting at the Frontier Army Museum, Kelvin Crow, command historian for the Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, led the free guided tour of the installation that included many of its historical venues. Crow also shared anecdotes and facts about notable points of interest on the post.

"Queen of the Frontier Posts," Fort Leavenworth's early mission was to ensure peace and to protect commerce on the Santa Fe Trail. Participants got off the bus to better see Memorial Chapel at 626 Scott Ave. Crow described the artifacts and historical markers covering the walls of the sanctuary. His 15-minute commentary included details of the chapel's construction.

During the bus safari, Crow used the vehicle's intercom to point out various locations on post and share insights of how Fort Leavenworth historically interacted with the region of the country as well.

Crow told the group about a "trading house" at Rialto on the east side of the Missouri River across from Fort Leavenworth. Rialto was where a contractor operated a steam ferry from the fort landed on the east bank in Missouri. The ferryman also reportedly ran the Rialto establishment catering to Fort Leavenworth soldiers where gambling, drinking and other nefarious activities allegedly took place. According to the Missouri Parks interpreter for Weston Bend State Park, the Army burned down Rialto after establishing a timber reserve to ensure they were rid of the business. The foundation is still visible and marked with an interpretive sign.

Crow pointed out many other significant points of interest during the tour, including the Oregon and Santa Fe trails in Kansas, and "The Rookery," the oldest continuously occupied residence in Kansas. Bus safari participants also learned about the old U.S. Disciplinary Barracks "Castle" history, which segued the group to the USDB Cemetery on Sheridan Drive. The cemetery was established in 1884 for inmates who were executed or died while incarcerated. Crow talked about several notable graves, including those of the 14 German prisoners of war who were executed in 1945.

"I thought (the tour) was fantastic and Kelvin does a magnificent job every time he does one of these," said Dr. Mark Hull, primary organizer and promoter of the FLHS bus safari.

The Combined Arms Center History Office gathers, preserves, makes accessible, analyzes, and publishes the history of the organization to make the commander and staff more effective and successful in their missions.

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.

For more information about the Fort Leavenworth Historical Society and future activities, contact Hull at 684-3349 or visit the group's Facebook page.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Combined Arms Center Command Historian Kelvin Crow tells Fort Leavenworth Historical Society tour participants about some of the plaques that hang in Memorial Chapel — including the three hung by the chapel doors in memory of 7th Cavalry officers who were killed in action in 1868 at Washita, Indian Territory, in 1876 at Little Bighorn, Montana Territory, and in 1877 at Bear Paw Mountain, M.T. — during one of the location stops along the bus tour Sept. 24. More than 40 people participated in the tour, dubbed a bus safari, which also stopped at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks cemetery. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp