

Major Marcus Reno looked down from the hills and saw Indians everywhere; he really couldn't move. Hours went by, and his men and horses were suffering from lack of water. Thirty-six hours passed and, unbeknownst to Reno, just up the valley Sitting Bull's warriors had annihilated his commander, George Armstrong Custer. Two hundred yards below Reno lay the life-blood water. A small group of soldiers staged a mock attack, while another group armed with camp kettles headed in the opposite direction to the creek for water. The foray was successful, although five men died in the attempt.

In 1870 and 1871, prior to this event, Major Reno had been commanding officer at Fort Hays, Kansas.

A Button Falls, a Story Unfolds

The Archeology Laboratory at the Kansas State Historical Society has a large accumulation of material excavated at Fort Hays. Christine Garst, who is in charge of the lab, encouraged me to find stories to write about this material. In a past issue of this publication, I did a story on some simple ways of identifying and dating military uniform buttons dug up at the site.

Recently I found another military button of particular interest. It is beautiful, as is evident in the accompanying illustration. It is quite robust and very well detailed and includes 13 stars within the shield on the eagle's breast, which identify it as an officer's button. But even more interesting is the manufacturer's name: Henry V. Allien Company of New York. In the earlier article, I noted that the Scovill Company and the Horstmann Company were the major producers of buttons for the army's use west of the Mississippi River. A little research soon revealed that the Allien Company was the manufacturer of buttons for West Point, the United States Military Academy.

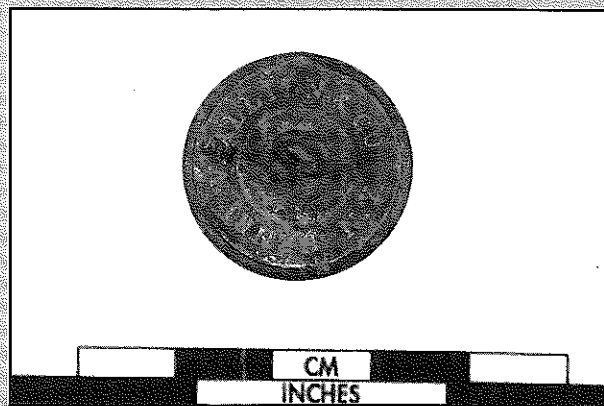


West Pointers, and it would be impossible to attribute our button to any one individual, even if a vintage letter could be found telling a wife of a lost button.

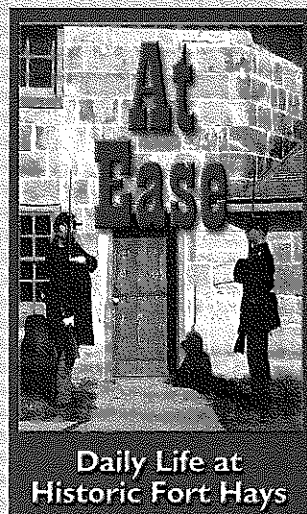
But, as William Shakespeare said, this may be a wonderful time for the "willing suspension of disbelief." What if this exquisite button fell from the uniform of Major Marcus Reno, an 1857 graduate of West Point? Would it have been at Antietam with him? Or at Cold Harbor, Trevillian Station, or Cedar Creek? Perhaps even at Harmony, Virginia, when his 12th Pennsylvania Cavalry encountered Mosby's rangers? And if it did by some slim chance belong to Major Reno, what a thrill to be able to see and touch a tiny piece of the Battle of Little Big Horn.

These artifacts can tell us so much in the way of factual history, but there is definitely a special and unique aura there, too.

This article was prepared by Marshall Clark, a volunteer in the KSHS archeology lab.



The back of the West Point button bears the manufacturer's name: Henry V. Allien Company of New York. The front of the West Point button is shown enlarged.



Daily Life at Historic Fort Hays

Fort Hays existed for about 20 years from 1869 to 1889 and was used to protect people on the trails west, both the Native Americans and the settlers. During its military tenure, Fort Hays had some 47 different commanders, many of whom served multiple times. It seems whatever troop was garrisoned there at the moment supplied the commander. Of course, with that many commanding officers, not to mention all the lieutenants and captains and so on, there were many

Stein to Retire After 30 Years at KSHS

After thirty years as an archeologist at the Kansas State Historical Society, Martin Stein is retiring. He began his service in September 1975 as the first staff archeologist in the Historic Preservation Office. Stein worked in the Preservation Office until 1993, when he transferred to the Archeology Office.

Over the years, Stein has reviewed tens of thousands of projects under state and federal laws for the protection of historic properties, in addition to preparing National Register of Historic Places nomination forms for archeological sites, districts, and for a thematic nomination of rock art sites. The photographs and records prepared for the rock art nomination have taken on a new importance, because some of the included sites have been destroyed through natural erosion or damaged by vandalism in recent years.

The review process was time-consuming in the early days, a time Stein refers to as "B.C. (Before Computers)." A typical review involved going from his office on the first floor of Memorial Hall (which then housed the KSHS) to the archeological files located on the third floor. After consulting records there, he returned to the first floor to examine maps stored in the archives. He then returned to his office to prepare a letter of response on a Royal standard typewriter, with the KSHS signature yellow file copy. That awkward procedure led to Stein obtaining copies of topographic maps that were marked with archeological site locations, surveyed areas, and notations from historic maps. Still later, a computerized database of information on site forms was created with an associated bibliography of references. The maps and database formed the basis for the Geographic Information System (GIS) currently used. That same process today is accomplished with mouse clicks that bring to a computer screen a topographic map or aerial photograph showing areas surveyed, historic map notations, and archeological site locations, as well as a site form that can also have photographs, notes, sketch maps, or reports attached.

Stein has been a willing participant in the annual Kansas Archeology Training Program, most often conducting an archeological survey with volunteers. Past survey projects have resulted in a

better definition of the distribution of Great Bend Aspect sites associated with the Little River Archeological District, a national historic landmark, and recording the first Day Creek Dolomite quarries, a regionally important lithic resource in South-west Kansas, among others. During his tenure in the Archeology Office he worked to preserve archeological components of the historic properties managed by the KSHS, including excavation prior to construction at the Native American Heritage Museum.

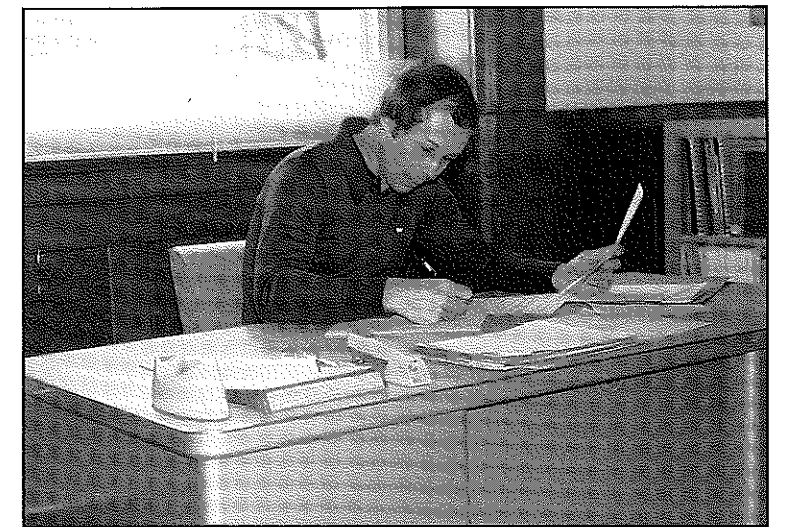
Martin's last day of work will be October 15. Although we will miss him, we wish him the best in his retirement.

Weston and Bauer Begin New Duties

The Cultural Resources Division hired Tim Weston as the new State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) archeologist. Weston has worked for the Kansas State Historical Society for 15 years. During most of his tenure, he served the Cultural Resources Division as highway archeologist. Weston began his new duties on August 8. He can be reached at (785) 272-8681 Ext. 214 or tweston@kshs.org.

Weston replaces Will Banks, who left the staff in July to accept a post-doctoral research position in Bordeaux, France.

Anne Bauer was hired to replace Weston as highway archeologist. Bauer has worked for the Cultural Resources Division's fee-funded contract archeology program since 2003. She holds a bachelor's degree in historic preservation from Southeast Missouri State University and a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Nebraska. Her research interests include historical archeology. She can be reached at (785) 272-8681 Ext. 256 or abauer@kshs.org.



Martin Stein at his desk in the Memorial Building in 1976.

Research

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It was a good match and helped me find my niche in the world. It was worth every moment, and if I could go back today, I would.

In the course of writing a piece like this, it is hard to not get mushy, although I've tried my best. If any of you reading this are doing what you love, you know how I feel. If others of you are searching, I have just a few words of advice. Don't trap yourself into thinking that you can only love one thing. Allow yourself to say "I don't know," and find out more. Apply for an internship, volunteer, or even talk to people in the fields that interest you. What do you have to lose?

After my internship, I went back to school at Washburn University and declared a second major in anthropology. I hope to continue to work with the Kansas State Historical Society and intend to go to graduate school in either anthropology or a related field that will allow me to conduct and publish historical research.

As a side note, I would like to thank everyone who helped and guided me through my discovery process at the Kansas State Historical Society. I am especially grateful to Virginia Wulfkuhle for extending this great opportunity and to Brenda Culbertson at Crane Observatory, because none of this might have happened if she hadn't hired me.