

# Traveling soldier contir

Henry Leavenworth did a lot of traveling in his day, and even a bit more posthumously. Leavenworth had strong ties to Delhi, and eventually, a city in Kansas was named after him.

Coming from a military family, lots of moving can be part of the job. Henry was born in New Haven, Conn., in 1783. He was the youngest of seven children, and his father, Jesse Leavenworth was a captain in the Revolutionary War. The family moved to Vermont and later came to Delhi around 1805.

In Delhi, Leavenworth went to school and adopted law as his profession. At age 21, he entered the offices of Gen. Erastus Root to continue his studies.

Admitted to the practice under Root's supervision and guidance, Leavenworth gained a good knowledge of law, as well as a keen insight and liking for the military inspired by listening to the experiences of pioneer settlers and Revolutionary patriots.

Things were going well for Leavenworth. He was accepted as a full partner with Root's firm, and had married a young girl named Electa Knapp. While awaiting the birth of their first child, Electa died. The mother and child were buried in the cemetery on Court Street, but were later removed to today's Woodland Cemetery. Leavenworth eventually remarried, twice.

The War of 1812 was nearing around this time, and Leavenworth raised a company (the 25th Infantry) for service and was himself commissioned a captain of infantry. Soon he was promoted to the rank of major, and commanded his regiment in the invasion of Canada at Niagara.

At the end of the war, Leavenworth obtained leave of absence so he could serve in the New York State Legislature, as a member of the Assembly.

Leavenworth re-entered the army as a lieutenant colonel. He was appointed an American Indian Agent by the government in the Northwest Territory. His wife, Harriet Lovejoy, stayed in Delhi to raise their daughter and teach in a select school, which was said to be the foundation of Delaware Academy.

Leavenworth continued to move for duty to Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska and Missouri. He had reached the rank of colonel at this time.

In 1827, orders came from Washington directing Leavenworth to leave the Jefferson Barracks in Missouri and ascend the Missouri River to select a site for a fort within 20 miles of the mouth of the Little Platte River. Its strategic importance was to guard the Santa Fe Trail and serve as a base for exploration and expeditions into unknown areas.

It was here in Kansas that "Cantonment Leavenworth" was established.

In 1834, Leavenworth, whose abilities were recognized by the war department, was placed in command of the entire southwestern frontier. He led an expedition against the Pawnee and Comanche Indians that he conducted with such tact and skill that no bloody clash with those tribes occurred, and yet he was able to obtain a treaty that satisfied the desires of the government. For this he was made a brigadier general.

Leavenworth didn't live to enjoy the honors, however. A fever resulted in his death July 21, 1834, at Cross Timbers, in what was then called the Indian Territory. His death

was the occasion of special remarks in the President Andrew Jackson's message to congress the following year.

The day previous to his death, Leavenworth requested in the event of his dying, that his remains be sent to Delhi, so he could be with his first wife Electa,

and the baby.

On April 24, a funeral procession was formed in New Orleans, and aboard a ship they traveled to New York City. Honors were paid by New York on May 18, and then his body was carried to Catskill. Root met the entourage here, and the westward travel began to Delhi, likely along the Catskill Turnpike.

Delhi paid its tribute to Leavenworth on May 23, 1834.

Oddly enough, Leavenworth's travels were still not finished. In 1902, a request was made from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to have the remains transferred there. Plans had been made for elaborate ceremonies to be held on Memorial Day in Kansas and also for the disinterment of the remains in Delhi. The remains were exhumed on Friday, May 23.

Apparently little or no opposition was raised in Delhi to the request for removal, except for the editor of the Delaware Gazette. In an editorial he wrote, "His monument should also have been taken, that a full history of this sacreligious transaction might go with the remains."

On Monday: Local farmers band together to help drought-stricken farmers in the South.

*City Historian Mark Simonson's column appears twice weekly. On Saturdays, his column focuses on the area during the Depression and before. His Monday columns address local history after the Depression. If you have feedback or ideas about the column, write to him at The Daily Star, or e-mail him at simmark@stny.rr.com. His website is www.oneontahistorian.com.*



## Backtracking:

### The Early Years

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SIMONSON