

E X P L O R E

*Fort Scott*  
K A N S A S

VISITOR  
GUIDE



[www.fortscott.com](http://www.fortscott.com)

*All phone numbers are area code 620 unless otherwise noted  
City map with locations on page 7.*



*Historic Downtown*

### Fort Scott National Historic Site

*One Old Fort Boulevard, 223-0310*

Established and garrisoned by the U.S. Army from 1842-1853, soldiers at Fort Scott assisted with the protection of the Permanent Indian Frontier. Discover the role played by dragoons and infantry in the frontier, the Mexican War, and westward expansion.

Immerse yourself in the conflict and turmoil of the Bleeding Kansas years, and imagine the sights and sounds of soldiers preparing for the Civil War.



*Fort Scott National Historic Site*

### U.S. National Cemetery

*East National Avenue, 223-2840*

U.S. National Cemetery is one of the 12 original national cemeteries designated by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862. Union and Confederate soldiers, Buffalo soldiers, and Indian Home Guard are all buried on the grounds.

### Fort Scott Jamboree

*Memorial Hall - Third and National*

A local tradition of Saturday evening concerts at Memorial Hall, the show features country music and includes some bluegrass and comedy. Performances are held every Saturday night starting in April and run through late November or early December.

### Scottish Rite

#### Masonic Temple

*110 South Main Street, 223-1330*

This Masonic Temple, constructed in 1923, features century-old stage backdrops valued at over \$200 million and a costume collection worth over \$2 million. The auditorium is equipped with a two-story pipe organ. Tours are available – walk-in or by appointment. Pipe organ concerts are available if scheduled in advance.



*Scottish Rite Masonic Temple*

### Block House (Fort Henning)

*West side of Skubitz Plaza*

During the Civil War, Fort Scott was used as a quartermaster depot. In this role, large quantities of supplies, stores, and ordinance were stored at the Fort, then shipped to army units throughout the region.



*Block House*

In order to protect Fort Scott in this new role, breastworks, stockades, and three block houses were erected. One was located to the east (Fort Inasley), one was on the corner of First and Scott (Fort Henning), and the third (Fort Blair) was placed at the corner of Second and National. Two of the block houses have been lost to the ravages of time. However, the last remaining block house was preserved and moved to its current location after the restoration of the Fort.

### Model Train Exhibit

*Inquire at the Visitor Information Center, 231 East Wall Street.*

Relive Fort Scott's railroad era by visiting the Keeney Collection. This private collection includes electric model trains and operating layouts, as well as Frisco Railroad memorabilia.

### Liberty Theatre

*113 South Main Street, 888-484-3542*

The newly remodeled Liberty Theatre was built in the late 1800s. Through the years it has seen a variety of uses and owners. In June of 2005 the building was purchased by the current owners and an extensive remodeling and redesign of the facility began. The Liberty Theatre has now been crafted into an exceptional venue. The building showcases two large murals with historic depictions of Fort Scott.



*Liberty Theatre*

### 1873 Congregational Church

*502 South National Avenue, 223-6423*

The 1873 Congregational Church was built in 1873 and is the only remaining single-steeple church in Fort Scott. Saved from demolition in 1968, the structure is now owned by the Historic Preservation Association and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The church is currently used as a wedding and special event venue.



*Old Congregational Church*

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# Hidden Treasures

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## Narrated Trolley Tours

Visitor Information Center, 231 East Wall Street

See everything Fort Scott has to offer during a relaxing ride on "Dolly" the Trolley while you enjoy a 50-minute narrated tour of historic Fort Scott. Included on the tour are our historic downtown, Victorian homes and mansions, and U.S. National Cemetery.

## Trading Post Museum

30 minutes north of Fort Scott on U.S. Highway 69

The Trading Post Museum preserves the history of Kansas' oldest existing settlement (1825). The victims of the Marais des Cygnes Massacre are buried in the adjacent Trading Post Cemetery near the Martyrs Memorial (erected in 1888). The residents of Trading Post also witnessed Union and Confederate forces engaged in combat in October 1864 during what has now become known as the Battle of the Mounds.

## Marais des Cygnes Massacre Site

Inquire at the Mine Creek Battlefield SHS Visitor Center

In May 1858, a group of proslavery men gunned down 11 free-state men in a ravine - 5 were killed, 5 were injured, and 1 was unhurt. The shootings shocked the nation and became a pivotal event of the Bleeding Kansas era. A few months later, abolitionist John Brown came to this site, built a log fort nearby, and patrolled the area to prevent any further tragedies. Take a drive through this now-beautiful natural setting and experience the massacre through outdoor interpretive exhibits. The massacre site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1974.

## Mine Creek Battlefield State Historic Site

Take U.S. Highway 69 north from Fort Scott for 21 miles. Turn left (heading west) onto Kansas Highway 52 for one-half mile.

In October 1864, outnumbered Federal forces attacked a retreating Confederate Army along the banks of Mine Creek and won. The Confederate's objective during the retreat on the way back to Missouri was to seize the ammunition and supplies stored at Fort Scott. The largest cavalry engagement of the Civil War, Mine Creek was the only major Civil War battle fought in Kansas. This dramatic story comes alive in the visitor center where you will see Civil War era uniforms, weapons, and photographs.



Visitor Center, Mine Creek Battlefield SHS



Photo courtesy: Patricia DuBose Duncan

**Gordon Parks** was born in Fort Scott on November 30, 1912, to Sarah and Andrew Jackson Parks. The youngest of 15 children, he attended local schools and left Fort Scott at 16 after his mother died.

In 1942, he was awarded the first Julius Rosenwald Fellowship in photography and chose to work at the Farm Security Administration in Washington, D.C. He was a freelance fashion photographer for *Vogue* and *Glamour*, and, in 1949, he was the first African-American photographer to join the staff of *Life* magazine where he worked as a photojournalist until 1972.

Gordon Parks wrote about his hometown of Fort Scott in his autobiographical novel and subsequent film, *The Learning Tree*, which was among the 25 films placed on the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress in 1989. He also broke new ground with a hip black hero on the silver screen named *Shaft*.

*"This small town into which I was born, has, for me, grown into the largest, and most important city in the universe. Fort Scott is not as tall, or heralded as New York, Paris, or London - or other places my feet have roamed, but it is home."*

*Gordon Parks  
"Homecoming," 2001\**

Parks was father to four children: Gordon Jr. (deceased), Toni, David, and Leslie. He lived in New York City most of his life and continued to create until his death on March 7, 2006. Parks is laid to rest near his beloved parents in Evergreen Cemetery.

## Gordon Parks Center

2108 South Horton Street; 888-874-3722

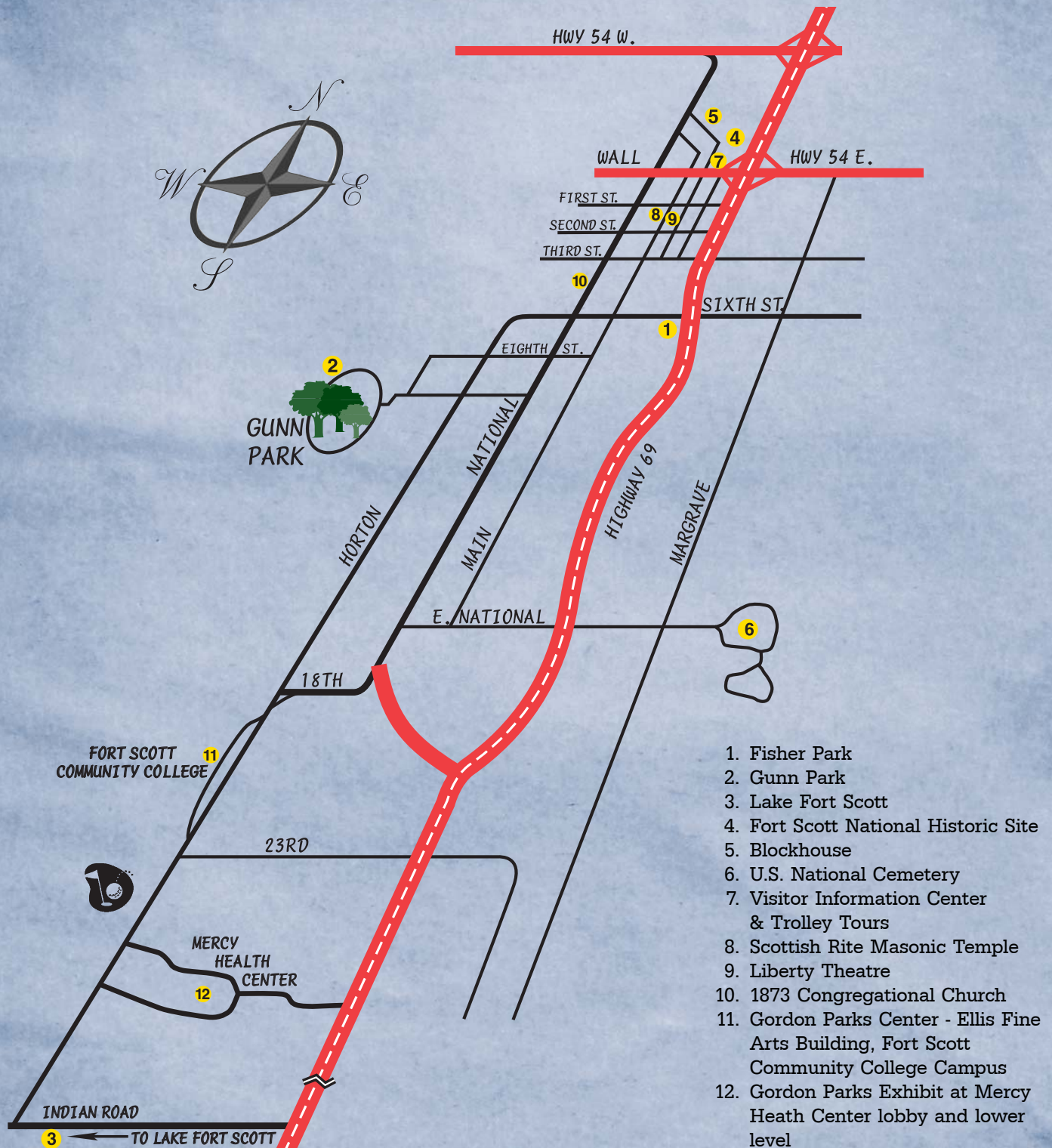
Fort Scott Community College established the Gordon Parks Center in April 2004 to highlight the life, achievements, and philosophies of Fort Scott's native son, Gordon Parks, a world-renowned photojournalist, filmmaker, novelist, poet, and composer. The Center serves as the organizing entity for educational and cultural programs and events that focus on Parks' message of hope in the face of adversity. Every October, the center presents the Gordon Parks Celebration of Culture & Diversity.

## Gordon Parks Exhibit

Mercy Health Center, 401 Woodland Hills Boulevard; 223-2200

The largest permanent display of Gordon Parks' work outside Washington, D.C. - 51 photographs and 14 poems - may be viewed in the corridors of Mercy Health Center. A self-guided tour is available for individuals and small groups, while staff in the Marketing and Development Department can provide guided tours for larger groups with advance notice.

\* Quote used with permission from the Gordon Parks Foundation.



1. Fisher Park
2. Gunn Park
3. Lake Fort Scott
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5. Blockhouse
6. U.S. National Cemetery
7. Visitor Information Center & Trolley Tours
8. Scottish Rite Masonic Temple
9. Liberty Theatre
10. 1873 Congregational Church
11. Gordon Parks Center - Ellis Fine Arts Building, Fort Scott Community College Campus
12. Gordon Parks Exhibit at Mercy Heath Center lobby and lower level

City map with locations on page 7.

### Gunn Park

End of Park Avenue

Located on the western edge of the city, Gunn Park was opened in 1905 as Fern Lake Park. W.C. Gunn acquired the Stewart farm (west part of the park), combined it with the existing park and in 1910 presented it to the city as Gunn Park. The second lake, stone shelters, and retaining walls were built by the Works Progress Administration during the 1930s. Trout fishing is a popular pastime during the winter. Playgrounds and picnic areas are located throughout the park as well as an 18-hole disc golf course.



Rock Pavilion at Gunn Park

### Fisher Park

Main Street between Sixth and Eighth Streets.

Named for Judge Harry Fisher, a beloved Fort Scott citizen, the 17-acre Fisher Park provides two lighted fields for youth baseball and adult softball. In addition to serving as the home field for local teams many local, district and state tournaments are held on these two fields. The swimming pool which includes a charming wading pool is the home of the Fort Scott swim teams. Tennis courts are open to the public, as well as picnic tables and playground equipment. Buck Run Community Center is located within the park.

### Lake Fort Scott

Four miles south of downtown on U.S. Highway 69 to Indian Road then west three miles.

Nestled in a lush, heavily wooded, rural setting teeming with wildlife, the 352-acre Fort Scott Lake provides residential living, as well as public boat-loading ramps for fishermen and water-skiers with restricted areas for all three. Stocked annually with channel cat, walleye, small-mouth bass, crappie, muskie, and bluegill, the lake provides many hours of recreation for anglers. Lakeside campsite areas, shelter houses, and picnic areas are available to residents and visitors, alike.

Lake Fort Scott



### Hollister Wildlife Area

13 miles southwest of Fort Scott. Take U.S. Highway 69 south four miles to Indian Road. Go west four miles on Indian Road to 165th Street. Go south on 165th Street to Hackberry Road. Go west on Hackberry Road for a short distance to the Information Kiosk.

The Hollister Wildlife Area has been a state wildlife area since 1978 and includes 2,432 acres of rolling range and pasture land, interspersed with native woodlands. Bluestem prairie dominates the open country. The prairie and associated woodlands support many species of wildlife to include quail, rabbits, turkeys, squirrels, and deer.

### Bourbon State Fishing Lake & Wildlife Area

28 miles west of Fort Scott on U.S. Highway 54 to Moran, KS. Take U.S. Highway 59 south 10 miles to Elsmore exit. East six miles on Delaware Road to lake.

Since 1959, the Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks has maintained this tract which includes 270 acres of land and a 103-acre lake. The west side of the lake is best for shore-based anglers. Earthen fishing piers, two floating docks, and three automatic fish feeders are present to improve angling opportunities. Resident and non-resident fishing permits are available from KDWP licensed agents.

### Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge

30 miles north of Fort Scott on U.S. Highway 69 at Kansas Highway 52 East.

The refuge is named after the Marais des Cygnes River which runs through the middle of the refuge and is the dominant natural feature of the region. The name, Marais des Cygnes, comes from the French language and translates as "Marsh of the Swans." It is presumed that trumpeter swans, which were historically common in the Midwest, used the wetlands adjacent to the Marais des Cygnes River during spring and fall migrations. The refuge was established in 1992 for the protection and restoration of bottomland hardwood forests. Approximately 5,000 acres of the 7,500-acre refuge are available for wildlife-oriented recreation including hunting, fishing, and birding. A wildlife sanctuary encompasses the remaining 2,500 acres and is not available for public use.

## Coming to Fort Scott to shop?

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# History of Fort Scott

Between 1842 and 1853, Fort Scott was established and garrisoned by the United States Army. As part of a line of forts stretching from Minnesota to Louisiana, Fort Scott was one link in a chain of fortifications to protect the Permanent Indian Frontier. Fort Scott was also located on the Frontier Military Road, built 1836–1845, connecting Fort Leavenworth with Fort Gibson, Oklahoma. The Army abandoned the Fort in 1853; subsequently, the buildings were purchased by local settlers at auction in 1855. The former military post became the center of one of the largest towns in Kansas Territory.



Between 1854 and 1861, the citizens of Fort Scott experienced the chaos and violent clash between free-state abolitionists and pro-slavery advocates. Eastern newspapers, upon hearing of the turmoil along the border, described the area as Bleeding Kansas. Murder, mayhem, robbery, and arson were committed by both sides during the fight to determine whether Kansas would be admitted into the Union as a free or slave state.



Kansas was admitted to the Union on January 29, 1861. Despite statehood as a free state, the violence of the Bleeding Kansas period continued throughout the Civil War. During this time, Fort Scott was used by the Union Army as a district headquarters, supply depot, training center, and recruitment station. The first African-American unit for the Union entered service at Fort Scott in January 1863.

After the Civil War, Fort Scott became one of the largest cities in eastern Kansas, rivaling Kansas City as the largest railroad center west of the Mississippi. Fort Scott became a center for agriculture, small industry, and insurance.

Between 1884 and 1895, Fort Scott was home to Albert Bigelow Paine. A photography supply dealer by trade, Paine operated a studio and gallery at Sixth and Main. Paine was a novelist and author. As soon as one of his works was accepted by *Harper's Weekly*, he sold the business and moved

to New York City. Paine would become known for writing the biography of his close friend, Mark Twain.

Fort Scott was also home to Eugene Ware, a Civil War veteran who became a lawyer and editor of the *Fort Scott Monitor*. He was elected twice to the Kansas Senate and served as Commissioner of Pensions under President Theodore Roosevelt. Ware also wrote poetry and stories using the pseudonym, Ironquill. Ware was Kansas' poet laureate and is buried in U.S. National Cemetery.

At the turn of the century, Fort Scott was home to three brick factories. These three factories produced 100,000 bricks weekly. Bricks manufactured in Fort Scott were used in the construction of the Indianapolis Speedway; the building of roads in Kansas, Missouri, and Texas; and the creation of the Panama Canal. Today our city has over 14 miles of streets laid with Fort Scott bricks.

In the 1960s, the community made a long-term commitment to preserve its extraordinary and elegant past. Many Victorian homes and commercial buildings have been preserved. The former military post was restored and added to the National Park Service as a National Historic Site in 1978. It is the only Mexican War era fort in the NPS system.

In March of 2009, Fort Scott became an "official" Kansas Community! A Kansas organization's evaluation of our community resulted in a Public Square Community accreditation for Fort Scott. The accreditation was awarded by Kansas Communities, LLC, an organization founded in 2004 that works to advance community development and community participation. The public square process includes four corners - government, education, business and human services, which encompasses both health and religion.

Evidence that Fort Scott is a community of "movers and shakers" is the fact that Fort Scott and its local residents are the proud owners of three Guinness World Records acquired in 2008! One record involved a team of Fort Scott residents working together to lay the fastest mile of pennies in the world. They did it in just 2 hours, 23 minutes and 1 second! The next was for a local resident eating the most McDonald Quarter Pounder Cheeseburgers in 3 minutes! And, the last record was for the longest continual lines of coins being laid. It stretched 40.32 miles. The attainment of these world records was part of a project coined "Pennies for the Park" to raise funds for Ellis Park.



## March

Fine Arts Exhibit  
Home Show

## April

Civil War Encampment  
Town-wide Garage Sale  
Festa Italiana

## May

Farmer's Market (*through October*)  
Highlights of History at the Fort

## June

Good Ol' Days Festival  
Secret Gardens of Fort Scott Tour  
Car Show  
Mexican War Encampment  
Echoes of the Trail

## July

Freedom Fest  
Fourth of July Fort Activities  
Bourbon County Fair

## September

Highlights of History at the Fort  
Town-wide Garage Sale  
Downtown Fall Festival  
Frontier Days  
Pioneer Harvest Fiesta

## October

Gordon Parks Celebration of Culture and Diversity  
Taste of Fort Scott  
Ghost Tours  
Halloween in the Park

## November

Christmas Tree Lighting & Parade

## December

Fort Candlelight Tour  
Homes for the Holidays  
Dolly HollyDay Tours  
Christmas in the Park

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