

# FORTRESS LARAMIE

*"Laramie is a symbol of hope; it is a symbol of strength. We its people must cast aside our differences and work together in order to prosper in this new world."*

*-- Governor Pauline Oxborrow*

## HISTORY

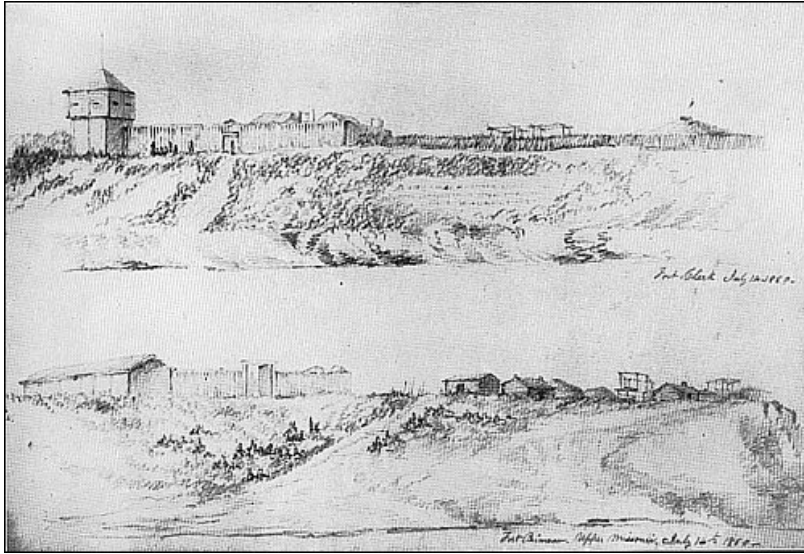
### The American Citadel

Fortress Laramie was founded in 1836, in the wake of a period of American expansionism into the American Continent. As America tried to secure safe passages through Indian Territory, they commissioned a massive fortress to be built as a rallying point for settlers and soldiers. The fortress was a work-in-progress for five years, during which America aggressively pressed into the continent, flocks of eager settlers in tow. By the time construction on the fortress was concluded, it was apparent that persistent harassment by native tribes of the area, armed and trained by British advisors, would prevent the U.S. Army from securing any land past that point. What was supposed to be a waypoint on the great Oregon Trail turned into the westernmost point of the American Territories. If the natives or the British made a move from the west, Fortress Laramie was the first line of defense. In essence, Fortress Laramie became the citadel of its nation, keeping a very angry and persistent adversary at bay. So vital was the security of Fortress Laramie that the Sixth Infantry Regiment was given permanent residence there, over a thousand soldiers strong, together with six companies of U.S. Cavalrymen. With over 1500 soldiers present, Fortress Laramie became the largest military base outside of the original thirteen colonies of America.

Alone in a hostile territory, Fortress Laramie was the rallying point of most American activity west of the Mississippi River. Any prospectors, scouts or people crazy enough to settle in the untamed lands past Laramie made their way there. The fortress became a boomtown that quickly filled to capacity with all sorts of people. While many moved forward with whatever endeavor brought them there, many more stayed within the secure walls of the fortress. Within a couple of years, Fortress Laramie suffered a serious population problem: too many mouths to feed and beds to keep safe. The administrators of the base tried to establish communities outside the walls, but frequent attacks from Sioux and Cheyenne raiders made them unfeasible. Add to that the extra troops deployed by the U.S. Army, the threat of attack from British troops in Canada and the threat of siege or annihilation by an ever-growing native army, it was only a matter of time before something snapped. Poor conditions and overcrowding lead to an epidemic of dysentery in 1846, which resulted in one out of every five people in Laramie either dying or becoming too sick to remain there. With so much of the population ill, it looked like Fortress Laramie would collapse, especially after the death of the regiment commander, Capt. Frederick Tracy Dent. Fortunately, when Captain Dent realized his illness, he called upon his old friend, Capt. Ulysses S. Grant, to come to his aid.

### A New Leader Emerges

Ulysses Grant and Frederick Dent were classmates at West Point Academy and brothers-in-law through marriage who remained close friends throughout their career. When Capt. Grant heard of his friend's illness, he called in all of his favors to get his regiment, the Thirteenth, assigned to Fortress Laramie to provide aid. Grant made a few enemies in the process, but he finagled what he wanted and was on his way. He arrived to find his friend on his



deathbed, holding on to life long enough to officially transfer regimental command to him, after which he passed away. At that moment, Capt. Grant was now commander of two regiments of U.S. soldiers, which as of yet was unprecedented. This immediately put him at odds with Fortress Laramie's commander, General. Samuel Ryan Curtis. A no-nonsense military man, General Curtis handled the pressures of the post by being a strict disciplinarian, which did little to improve morale among the people of Fortress Laramie. Locals looked to Capt. Dent for moral support, a role into which Capt. Grant could easily step into. The sympathy-over-discipline approach that Capt. Grant conveyed to the general

population did not sit well with General Curtis, but he knew that he could not afford to lose the popular support that he garnered. He acquiesced to Capt. Dent's transfer of power and gave Grant a field promotion to colonel, which made his command over the soldiery of Fortress Laramie official. From that point forward, General Curtis and Colonel Grant would always butt heads on the execution of policy, even though they never acted against each other. Despite their disagreements, both were officers of the U.S. Army who placed their duty above all else.

Since its early days, Fortress Laramie had civil relations with the Lakota, one of the many tribes of natives who inhabited the area. They were willing to help the U.S. Army in exchange for firearms and protection, an arrangement both sides agreed upon in the Treaty of Laramie of 1839. Neither side upheld their part of the treaty beyond what was convenient, which was one of the many reasons that peace never prospered in the region. When Colonel Grant learned of this, he relayed a message to the local Lakota, which consisted of one word: "Parlay." He set up a small encampment outside of the walls of Laramie and stood watch over it, alone and armed only with his saber. He waited there for three days until, with no food and only water to sustain him. To everyone's surprise, a small delegation of natives approached him with food, armed only with knives and tomahawks. They identified themselves as Lakota and began a two-day dialogue with Colonel Grant. By the end, they had drafted a proposal that soon became the Second Treaty of Laramie, ratified by Grant, Curtis and the Lakota in 1847. In exchange for free passage to and from the Fortress, as well as the concession of 1000 yards of land in every direction from the fortress walls, the people of Laramie would not expand beyond this new boundary, and would agree to limited trade of non war-related goods, such as medicine and winter gear. Fortress Laramie wasted no time in expanding into the newly-available territory. Within the year, these new lands had been cleared and declared fit for construction, and a massive wall was built for protection. Once completed in 1848, General Curtis proclaimed Outer Laramie ready for settlement.

The expansion of Fortress Laramie brought about a new wave of prosperity, as well as its own set of problems. While settlers came to Laramie by the hundreds, the Cheyenne lashed out against any who traveled to Laramie, angry at the Lakota's acquiescence. Conflict raged between Fortress Laramie and the natives for nearly two decades. As hostilities increased, some people from the native tribes sought sanctuary within the walls of Fortress Laramie. The general population was quick to admonish the idea of allowing them into their walls. Colonel Grant chose to honor the spirit of the Second Treaty instead of its letter, however, and allowed them to live within Outer Laramie, provided they pledged allegiance to the United States. These natives were more than eager to do so, some of whom later became some of Fortress Laramie's staunchest supporters.

## The Reckoning

There are many stories as to the hows or the whys of the day that everything fell apart. Some took to calling it *The Reckoning*, others called it *The End of Days* and *The Big One*. No one knows why the world decided to crack in half, but there was one thing of which Fortress Laramie was certain: in the wake of the great earthquakes that rocked the land, all contact with the United States of America ceased. The telegraph signal went silent and the rails were quiet. Within a few, short weeks, the people of Laramie realized the fact that they were alone in the world. America was not coming to help, and this left the arduous task of rebuilding their home squarely on their shoulders.



General Curtis died during the earthquakes. Colonel Grant quickly assumed the reins of the reconstruction effort as he coordinated the Fortress' limited resources with what trained personnel they could gather from the survivors. Despite the massive damage to the local buildings, the walls of Laramie, designed to endure barrages of cannon fire, remained mostly intact. Furthermore, as Laramie was a settlement of prospectors, laborers and fortune-seekers, there was a lot of talent to choose from. Every able-bodied person was put to work to rebuild their home.

Two months after the disaster, Colonel Grant assembled the combined soldiery of Laramie in the main courtyard and asked them plainly if he should remain in charge. As far as anyone was concerned, the United States was gone and they would have to decide their way of life on their own. The soldiers unanimously cheered for Colonel Grant, which cemented him as the new leader of Laramie. One of the soldiers took his spare uniform without his knowledge and affixed General insignia on it. Soldiers took to calling him "General Grant" and the impromptu promotion stuck. It is said that General Grant still wears that same threadbare and worn uniform to this day.

Once things at Fortress Laramie began the slow and steady crawl back to normal, General Grant sent scouts north, east and south to survey what remained of the land. Many of them did not return, but those who did told stories of a shattered land, where everything as far as the eye could see was laid to waste. The railroad east was broken throughout its length and the telegraph line had been swallowed by the earth at multiple locations. One scout made it as far as the ruins of Omaha, where he came upon the ocean! None of this made sense, and the whole operation was scrapped after six months. This endeavor, *The Laramie Continental Survey*, did little more than alert others of Laramie's survival. Some of the scouts even crossed small bands of survivors, whom they instructed to follow the path to their home. This would start a trend that would forever redefine Fortress Laramie.

Despite their many efforts, the natives of the land were unable to prevent settlers from expanding further west along the Oregon Trail prior to *The Reckoning*. With everything falling apart the way it did, those settlers had it much worse than Laramie. Most of them abandoned their homes and traveled east, back towards the fortress, in hopes of survival. Settlers from the wreckage of Canada set out, also finding their way to Laramie. They were British and had

been the sworn adversaries of America for decades. They certainly did not expect a warm welcome when they arrived, and people at Laramie received these cold and lonely strangers apprehensively. Not only were some of them once enemies of the United States, but most had brought no more than the clothes on their backs. Who would feed, clothe and house them? Would there be enough to survive the coming winter? Refugees were gathering outside the walls of Outer Laramie and people were scared. They would have escalated to panic had it not been for the duo who would become Fortress Laramie's power couple: Pauline and Alexander Oxborrow.

## **The Heroes of Laramie**

Recently arrived among the Canadian refugees, the Oxborrows quickly organized and rallied them to work together. Pauline took stock of what few resources they collectively had and rationed them so that everyone had something to eat and wear. Alexander gathered several rough-and-tough folk and organized them into a makeshift militia to uphold law and order among the refugees, as well as protect them from native raids. No one would go hungry or cold, nor would they be attacked or robbed, as long as the Oxborrows had a say in the matter. It's no wonder that when it came time for the refugees and General Grant to speak, they elected the Oxborrows to speak for them.

General Grant was uncertain as to how Fortress Laramie could handle the influx of refugees. Unless he could come up with a way to make their resources stretch, he would have been forced to turn away many of them. Fortunately, the Oxborrows planned for such a concern. When it came time for the Oxborrows and Grant to speak, both presented their cases to each other. As fate would have it, each side had the means to solve the problems of the other. Fortress Laramie lacked technical personnel to spearhead recovery, while the refugees counted among them a couple of engineers and several physicians. The refugees lacked many basic supplies to survive the coming winter, yet Fortress Laramie had enough raw materials to get people to work. Within the span of dinner, which is said to have consisted of beans, rice and some canned beef, the three of them merged their halves of the solution and drafted up a comprehensive plan for integrating the communities. So long as everyone did their part, everyone could endure the coming hardships together.

The people of Laramie reluctantly took the refugees into their homes, and they, in turn, shared what they had and pitched in as needed. Slowly, and inspired by the impassioned words of General Grant and the Oxborrows, households started to adopt each others' ways. Some Americans took to tea time, while some British found solace in admiring the sunset alongside Lakota settlers. Alexander Oxborrow's men kept the peace within the walls, while General Grant ascertained the dangers from outside the walls. Within three years, Fortress Laramie had rebuilt itself to the point that those who toiled could have a home of their own. Surprisingly, some families chose to remain with their fosters, having gotten along so well with each other. It was from this tradition of merging families that the Laramie Clans emerged. Two or more families would combine to form a single Clan, each taking the names of the other families as their own, as was customary in Britain.

## **A New Way of Life**

If the people of Laramie were going to successfully integrate, they would have to shed the old ways and create a way of life that was their own. A council was formed, its members picked from some of the more influential Clans and families, that would decide on how the people of Laramie would govern themselves. Despite the many petty rivalries among the various council members, they all agreed that the current system worked and they should build upon it. After three weeks of debate, it was decided that Laramie would be run by a civilian governor, who would work alongside a military commander. Each group would elect their own leaders, who in turn would cooperate at the

top level. As council member Nicholas Earp was famously quoted as saying: "This cuts out the bullshit and lets good folk do what needs to get done." Unsurprisingly, both Pauline Oxborrow and General Grant were elected to head their respective sides in 1868, positions that both continue to hold to this day.

The native tribes were still against Laramie and continued their attacks as before. Travel outside of Laramie became difficult, but was achievable with the help of former natives who now counted themselves among the people of Laramie. Thanks to the efforts of some of the once-American settlers, some of the land in Outer Laramie, which had been renamed Hope after the 1868 elections, was converted into cropland. The once-British engineers were even able to fashion a foundry within Fortress Laramie itself, which allowed them to repair their metal goods and build munitions and firearms. This allowed Laramie's cannons to remain operational, which turned the tide against the native attacks and let them hold their own. So long as Laramie could keep their cannons operational, they could enforce the détente with the natives of the land.

Laramie would endure, albeit with only a fraction of the amenities that they once had. The people of Laramie became adept at recycling and refurbishing what they once had a-plenty, like cotton clothing, oak furniture, and gold and silver jewelry. It was common for several members of a Clan to share one luxury article, as did it become customary for these items to be held in high esteem, as they represented their ability to endure in the face of adversity. Much like General Grant's beaten-up uniform, to possess an heirloom from the Old World was seen as a badge of pride. This is why you still see influential people proudly wear their patched-over top hats or walk with their old mahogany canes. That may look like a faded and worn silk parasol, but was the only one left in the world, so it was priceless!

## The Oxborrow Raiders

While General Grant and Pauline Oxborrow ran things in Laramie, Alexander Oxborrow spearheaded the exploration drive into the unknown territories. Former surveys could no longer be relied upon in the wake of *The Reckoning*, so someone had to get out there and take a look. Many people volunteered to join Oxborrow on his drives into the new frontier. Rather than find dangerous ground or native raiding parties, they encountered things that were much, much worse. Terrible and dark creatures lurked in the shadows and came out of the ground to drag men away while they slept. Others spoke of strange "Boogeymen" who stole the breaths of men. While many accused these people of being mad, Alexander Oxborrow, having listened to the folk tales told by the various people in Hope during his militia days, trusted his instincts that there was more to this than hysteria.

Oxborrow consulted with any Laramie natives he could find and learned their folklore. He trained his men in these unorthodox tactics, including the superstitions of other people. He gathered twenty Laramites whom he could trust to follow these measures, and he headed into the woods. Three days later, he returned to Hope with his prey in tow. Many people remember that Summer evening in 1870, when Alexander Oxborrow returned with nine men and a monster. Some say it was ten feet long and covered in thorns. Others remember that it was black as night and had smooth skin. Regardless, Alexander Oxborrow proved that monsters were real. He also assured the people of Laramie that he and his Raiders, as he took to calling them, knew how to kill them. Since that day, the Oxborrow Raiders have dedicated themselves to understand these unknown threats, as well as to find the best and most effective means to wipe them off the face of what's left of the Earth.

## New Friends, Old Enemies

After years of harassment, both the native tribes and Laramie accepted the futility of further conflict. The United States of America was gone, and Laramie was not going to expand beyond its current size, so there was no point for the natives to fear an expanding threat. The natives, it turned out, had problems of their own and needed Laramie's help.

Once both sides agreed to a cease-fire and to maintain current boundaries, the natives introduced the people of Laramie to a third group of survivors. Somewhere out in the west, a large group of Chinese people who called themselves *The People of New Lhasa*, had previously established ties with the natives. Once known, they sought to engage in limited trade with the other two nations. While the natives had access to bountiful resources and Laramie had a foundry that could produce manufactured metalwork, the Chinese had something invaluable to both: gunpowder. Each nation could manufacture a limited supply of gunpowder, but none of it compared in quantity and quality than what the Chinese could make. With Chinese gunpowder, Laramie's cannons could fire twice as far, greatly expanding Laramie's area of influence. The three groups agreed on a cease-fire and limited trade agreement, which became known as the Third Treaty of Laramie, ratified in 1870.

Shortly after the treaty was signed, all three nations became aware of a mutual threat that stood to destroy them all. When the land was torn asunder in 1865, it released something sinister and foul. Each nation has accounts of ground-burrowing monsters that would drag their prey underground. Alexander Oxborrow, who had spearheaded Laramie's renewed exploration efforts, confirmed such creatures from reports from his men. The number of incidents that were confirmed by the nations indicated an exceedingly large presence of these monsters. If left unchecked, these creatures would surely consume them all.

Each nation brought their best to bear. The natives of the land had stories of these monsters, which they called KeeWakws, which yielded information on how to fight them. The People of New Lhasa gave up their finest gunpowder, while Laramie sent the Oxborrow Raiders, as well as a cache of newly-minted rifles, to join the fray. Over the next two years, the combined forces of man hunted the KeeWakws to extinction. Many people died on all sides, but the threat of these monsters was forever erased from the land. No more would people have to fear these monsters, nor would they need to sleep with one eye open. At last, the three nations were safe.

## The More Things Change...

With the threat of the KeeWakws handled, Fortress Laramie focused its attention inwards. Over the two years of fighting the monsters, Laramie had assembled enough forward bases that they had sparsely populated the area surrounding their outer wall. Some outposts were located as far as thirty miles away from Fortress Laramie. Now that the war was over, the natives insisted that they be disassembled and that the people of Laramie return home. General Grant did not cave in to their demands. Instead, as he had done over twenty years ago, he pitched a tent and set camp outside the furthest of the Laramie outposts, and waited for his people to come. This time, however, things did not go as smoothly as before.

Within the day, members of the Lakota, Crow and Cheyenne tribes, representatives of New Lhasa arrives, as did the Oxborrows and members from the Laramie community. To Grant's surprise, the people of Laramie played host to

their guests, which lead to a two-day jamboree, full of food, drink and dance. While the delegates celebrated, Grant and the foreign delegates got to work. Try as they could, no one was willing to budge enough to make the others happy, politicians being what they are. The Cheyenne made threats of blood, the Lakota declared Laramie in violation of the Second Treaty and the Chinese insisted on Laramie returning any of their people who'd jumped ship and joined the fortress' population. That last point was a sore spot that none of the foreigners were too pleased about.

Over the years, as Fortress Laramie thrived within its walls, people from the tribes and New Lhasa took to their way of life and chose to stay. They all knew that doing so would brand them as traitors to their own people, but people are what they are and will do what they do. In the end, enough natives and "Lassies", as they were nicknamed, took residence in Hope to form an appreciable part of the community; some even joined resident families to form new Clans. This made for quite a pickle for the other nations, as word spread among their people of all that Laramie had to offer. They did what they could, but they couldn't stop people from coming. Rumors are that New Lhasa even declared Fortress Laramie a "Forbidden Place" to their people, whatever that means. In the end, this sore spot, as well as everyone's intractable demands, made it apparent to all that they wouldn't come to any agreeable arrangement.

Rather than duke it out right there, Grant, the Oxborrows and the others had the good sense to part ways on good terms. In the end, things went back to the way they were. The Cheyenne sent war parties any chance they got, the Lakota played nice, the Crow came and went as their spirits deemed necessary and the people of New Lhasa traded as it suited them. Things remained tense, with the occasional skirmish and grudge cropping up between this and that group. Things would have stagnated, likely leading to another war, had it not been for the discovery in Omaha.

## **Enter Cardiff**

Lakota scouts brought word of strangers arriving by boat to the East. This was corroborated by Oxborrow's Raiders reports of Ironclads anchored off the ruins of Omaha. These ships sported flags that no one recognized, so everyone pulled back and met to discuss their options. The thought that there were people alive beyond the ocean suddenly made all of the problems between the three nations seem trivial. Could America, Britain and the other nations still be out there? Could the people of Laramie finally go home? Nothing seemed to matter beyond those questions being answered as Laramie and the others agreed to cease causing each other trouble until they sorted out what was going on.

Scouts reported that the newcomers were quick to construct fortifications and cannon emplacements around Omaha, which meant they were there to stay. Members of the Laramie Cavalry recognized the cannons to be of American design, which gave the people of Laramie hope. With their guns in place, neither side would come within ten miles of each other without getting blown to smithereens. All they could do, it seemed, was wait for someone to make the first move.

The newcomers were first to act as they approached Fortress Laramie three weeks later. To everyone's surprise, they arrived along the defunct railroad tracks from Omaha, which they had repaired as they travelled. When they got within the range of Laramie's cannons, they signalled the white flag and sent a small contingent of soldiers in American military uniforms to meet with the people of Laramie. After a brief dialogue between some uniformed men and Colonel Grant (they insisted on speaking with him alone), the delegation departed back to their railed convoy to wait. That evening, Colonel Grant addressed the people of Laramie to give them the news that the American soldiers had delivered.

Colonel Grant told the people of Laramie how *The Reckoning* destroyed the known world, how the only nations to survive were The United States of America, the United Kingdom and some group calling itself the Roman Ascendancy, how they joined together under the Treaty of Cardiff and how the U.S and Britain opened their arms to bring their people home. Grant then told the people of Laramie of his orders: All non-citizens of the United States were to evacuate Fortress Laramie within forty-eight hours. This last piece of news caused a stir within the assembly, at least until the Oxborrows spoke. As they had all survived together, they said, so too would they endure this latest challenge together. Those who wished to leave would be welcome to do so, but those who stayed could band with Laramie and defy these orders. Less than one hundred of the thousands of people assembled that day chose to return home, which all but cemented Laramie's solidarity against the United States. On that day, April 19, 1882, Fortress Laramie officially declared its independence from the United States of America.

## Welcome To The Fold

Within a week of declaring their independence from the United States, delegates from the Treaty of Cardiff visited Fortress Laramie. As a gesture of peace and cooperation, they delivered a miracle to the people of Laramie. A wagon carrying bags full of mail was delivered, filled with letters from family members who had survived the devastation and now resided within the Cardiff nations, as well as a list of family members who had not survived. Laramie was awash in tears of joy and sorrow as people learned the truth of their families, for better or for worse. The people of Laramie banded together to celebrate and mourn, all the while singing the praises of the Cardiff delegation that brought them this news.

The Cardiff nations realized that Laramie was the largest, most stable settlement on this continent, so they offered to complete the railroad and join Omaha and Laramie by train. Although General Grant expressed caution at the proposal, Pauline Oxborrow saw great benefit for the people of Laramie to have a stable connection between them and the Cardiff outpost. In the end, Laramie agreed to the railroad, which brought with it scores of new settlers, vendors and adventurers looking for their fortune. Anyone from the outside world coming to "The New Frontier" would have to make their way through Laramie sooner or later, bringing with them curiosities and marvels from across the ocean. It's a great time to live in Laramie.



## MAJOR EVENTS

**1836** - The U.S. Army begins construction of Fortress Laramie, a military stronghold along the Oregon Trail.

**1841** - Fortress Laramie is completed under the command of Colonel Samuel Ryan Curtis.

**1846** - *The Great Dysentery Epidemic* kills or cripples one fifth of Fortress Laramie's population, including Capt. Frederick Tracy Dent. His close friend Capt. Ulysses S. Grant replaces him.

**1847** - Capt. Grant drafts the Second Treaty of Laramie with the Lakota tribe.

**1848** - Outer Laramie is opened for settlement, which invites scores of pioneers to come to Laramie.

**1865** - *The Reckoning* fractures the continent and causes much damage to Fortress Laramie. General Curtis was killed and General Grant takes command with overwhelming support.

**1866** - The first group of survivors are welcomed to Laramie, including Pauline and Alexander Oxborrow.

**1868** - Pauline Oxborrow is elected Governor of Outer Laramie, now renamed Hope.

**1870** - The Third Treaty of Laramie is ratified, after which the three nations hunt the KeeWakw to extinction. Alexander Oxborrow forms the Oxborrow's Raiders, specially trained to hunt monsters.

**1880** - People from the Cardiff nations are spotted for the first time.

**1882** - Fortress Laramie declares independence from the United States, which marks them as an independent nation in the eyes of the Treaty of Cardiff.

## NOTABLE LEADERS

Fortress Laramie started as a military base, so everything was decided by the local military commander. Once Hope was founded, the people of Laramie called for a civilian governor to manage their affairs. Together, these two positions see to the needs of Fortress Laramie. The civilian governor sees to the needs of the people, while the military commander handles outside threats. They don't always see eye-to-eye, but the system works.

**General Ulysses S. Grant, Military Commander** - Arriving in the wake of his best friend's death, General Grant proved to be a capable and savvy military leader. Known to bend the rules in favor of the spirit of the law, he had his fair share of run-ins with the higher-ups in the U.S. Army. As the Military Commander of Fortress Laramie for the last twenty years, he has shown a good head for knowing when diplomacy is needed and when situations need to be solved with warfare.

**Pauline Oxborrow, Civilian Governor** - Formerly from the Canadian Northwest Territories, she guided the survivors from her town south to Laramie. A headstrong yet even-tempered leader, she has proven herself to be a capable representative for the people of Hope, so much so that she continues to be re-elected after twenty years. Her relationship with General Grant runs just as often hot as cold.

**B. Alexander Oxborrow, leader of *Oxborrow's Raiders*** - Together with his wife Pauline, he led his people from Canada all the way to Laramie. Known for his incredible strength and stamina, he has always been known to face whatever lies before him head-first. Stories say that in his heyday, he could cut down a tree with one mighty swing from his axe. When the threat of monsters became real, he founded the *Oxborrow's Raiders* to combat the threat. Such is his dedication to the group that he rarely spends time at Laramie, as he is out fighting one threat or another.

**Wyatt Earp-Stapp** - The fourth son of Nicholas Earp and the seventh son of the Earp-Stapp Clan, Wyatt became known as the youngest man with a confirmed KeeWakw kill during the fighting of 1872. He rejected Oxborrow's personal invitation to join the first ranks of Raiders back then, in favor of serving Hope as a deputy, a slight that is said he has still not forgotten. When Sheriff Burt Hoyt accepted America's invitation to return home, he was expected to take over as Sheriff. Instead, he left Laramie and moved to Omaha, which earned him the scorn of many people.

## THE LANDS OF FORTRESS LARAMIE



Fortress Laramie was built on a 200-acre parcel of land, surrounded on all sides by heavy stone walls several feet thick. With gun emplacements surrounding the perimeter, there was little chance of any sustained attack breaching Fortress Laramie. No one knows exactly how far the canons of Laramie can fire, but due to their steady supply of New Lhasa gunpowder, it is speculated that they can deliver a sustained barrage several miles away, which is no small feat. Many of the original soldiers that once served the U.S. Army still live within its walls, which puts the number of active soldiers in the thousands.

Surrounding the Fortress is a walled city with a diameter of about one mile past the fortress walls. This ring-shaped city, called Hope, houses the

civilian population of several thousand people. Dotted with many crops and several corrals, the city of Hope is a thriving metropolis of business. Many an adventurer from the Cardiff nations heads this way in search of their fortune, which the people of Hope are all too eager to let them spend in their markets, saloons and general stores.

The area surrounding Laramie, within fifty miles of the Outer Wall, is nicknamed *The Wild Lands*. Although under the purview of the Laramie Army, there is little support provided to the region beyond patrols and the occasional garrison. The area is dangerous, with who-knows-what kind of bandits, raiders, or monsters waiting to strike those who live outside the walls. People who settle in the *Wild Lands* are either very brave, very foolish or have enough resources to maintain a small army for protection.

## DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RESIDENT

Depending on the household, the average person in Laramie may wake up to the smell of flap-jacks, kimchi on toast, corn bread and gravy, or any of a number of fusion dishes that people have concocted. Meals are always small, with everyone receiving seconds at once. You are just as likely to find your mother as you are a Clan-brother sitting alongside you at the long eating table. Once finished, after every morsel of food has been eaten, you head out to start your daily chores.

It is rare for a person in Laramie to be idle; there is always something that needs doing. Most people from Laramie take to some kind of hands-on hobby, so as to have something to do if a job requires waiting. There is no shortage of whittlers, braiders, amateur sketch artists, and card trick dealers in Laramie. Work is often long and difficult, but the Code of Conduct clearly states “an honest wage for honest work”, so people know they'll get their fair share.

There is often someone playing one sport or another, whether it's Cricket, Baseball or Courtball. It doesn't matter which nation came up with the idea, as long as it is fun, you can get good at it and lots of people can play. Over yonder, a young girl is kicking the pants off a bigger boy while sparring with wooden swords. It's just another day of kids being kids in Laramie.

That afternoon, while sitting at the local saloon enjoying a sip of pulque, two Clans are disputing some claim over cattle, horses or something. A deputy stands as arbiter between the two Clan speakers, each of whom have their dueling Seconds behind them. If they don't come to terms soon enough, the matter may be settled by pistols in the street, as it should be.

With a local jamboree in the works for that evening, it is time for the Clan to bring out their heirlooms to show. One Clanmate sports the family's waistcoat and tophat, while another wears the family's taffeta dress and parasol. All these items can be traced back to when they were purchased in 1854, in honor of their Clan founder's brother's wedding. It is expected that each member of the Clan can recite when and why each patch, stitch or adjustment was done.

As the group heads to the jamboree, a lone crow flies over their path, which causes them to immediately form a circle, hold hands and give thanks to General Grant, the Oxborrows and everyone else who ensured their survival. It is said that lone crows only cross the path of the ungrateful, so it's better to be safe. In a world where monsters are real and the oldest of folklore serves you well in fighting them, how can you not be superstitious?

A good jamboree is a festive time for everyone. Whether they dance a waltz, a hoe-down or a tribal stomp dance, everyone has a merry time. Anyone sitting to the sides being shy is taken into the crowd -- no one is ever left alone in Laramie. Once the night is over, everyone heads home, spends some quality time with their families and carefully retires their heirlooms, for tomorrow is another day.

# CUSTOMS AND STYLE

The people of Laramie are defined by the struggles they endured in surviving. For twenty years, they subsisted on the bare necessities and worked tirelessly to fix what was broken. Everything in Laramie culture revolves around living a modest and spartan existence, always grateful for what little they have. You will never see someone from Laramie waste food or discard something that could be useful. Rather, someone will eat the leftover food or take what was discarded back home with them. In fact, it is considered slothful to serve yourself more food than you can eat, as that takes food away from someone who will go without.

Family is incredibly valuable to a person from Laramie. It was families that kept everyone together, so they represent the backbone of society. If you have concern or trouble with someone, be prepared to face their entire family. Family is so important that people from Laramie adopted the tradition of joining their families into larger groups called Clans. Both families adopt a hyphenated joining of their name in alphabetical order. This shows people that the person stands strong, knowing that they have two or more families at their back. They will often share a home, share food, sleeping space and even warmth. Clansfolk who marry within their clans is valued, as it makes the union of families even more solid.

Once the world was shown to be full of monsters, and that folklore and old wives' tales had some truth to them, the people of Laramie got to following every superstition they learned. They see it as a precaution, a means to better be safe than sorry, as it were. Some common superstitions include:

- Never walk under a standing ladder.
- Never rest your hat right side up, always upside-down.
- Never drink from a spilled cup.
- Always mount a horse with your right foot stirrured first.
- Never wear yellow when going into battle.
- Wear two socks of different color if you want good luck.
- Never take back a borrowed gun from someone unless it has been fired.
- Never accept a weapon as a gift. Always give something in return.
- Wearing a trophy from a kill will bring you its luck, whether it is good or bad.
- If you stare at your reflection for too long, you will see how you die.

People from Laramie take great pride in their work, especially any crafts that they've made with their own hands. They will often be seen doing something with their hands, whether it is whittling a stick, shuffling cards or doing needlework. It shows that they are accustomed to being busy and thus not prone to idling. This especially holds true with any relics that they have preserved from before *The Reckoning*. An old waistcoat from before that day may bring pride to a Clan, but to have it adorned with elaborate embroidery makes it that much more prestigious. This is why people from Laramie take to wearing something old and worn as often as possible, especially if it was repaired with their own hands. It shows a strength of character that few who have not endured the nation's hardship can understand. In fact, anyone who wears new and clean gear is seen as soft or weak, as their gear does not show the trials that they've overcome. As the saying goes: "You show me someone with a brand new duster and I'll show you someone who hasn't tested their mettle."

## HOLIDAYS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Holidays in Laramie are a serious affair, as they are among the few traditions that were created whole cloth from the community as a whole. They are not ostentatious affairs, as people are accustomed to having little beyond the bare necessities. Instead, everyone brings something, no matter how small it is, and they make due with whatever they gather. It's amazing how much merriment you can have with a jug of moonshine, two fiddles and a refurbished harpsichord.

Here is a list of the major holidays that are celebrated in Laramie:

**Election Day** - Even though elections are held every six years, Election Day celebrates the foundation of the city of Hope and the Laramie government. People gather and vote on an assortment of positions, such as "Town Fool", "Lady of Virtue", "Lord Gallant", deputies, ministers and various other positions of responsibility.

**Homecoming** - This holiday celebrated in honor of *The Reckoning* and the survival of the refugees who helped Laramie overcome the destruction. People gather and share stories from before The Reckoning, stories of their homeland and the people from where they came. It is common for children to be fostered with other families for a week after Homecoming, so that they learn how other people live.

**Independence Day** - Celebrated in honor of the Laramie Declaration of Independence of 1882, the people of Laramie spend the day playing games, throwing jamborees and otherwise have a rip-roaring time. Although the tradition of burning American and British flags is illegal, no one has ever been arrested for doing so.

**Harvest** - In keeping with old traditions, the people of Laramie have a large celebration of the coming winter. They prepare all sorts of food, which they share freely with any who ask. They also tell stories of their families and heroes of Laramie, people who weathered the harsh and unforgiving winters during Laramie's early years.

## KNOWN ORGANIZATIONS

**The Army of Laramie:** Still led by General Ulysses S. Grant after twenty years, they are the front line of defense against all invaders of Laramie. They still adhere to the protocols and code of conduct of the United States, although many of their recruits have never set foot there. With horses in such high demand, General Grant has taken a more defensive posture in his military operations, as mobility is limited. This policy can change once Cardiff builds its railroad further inland.

**Oxborrow's Raiders, "The Ox Heads":** Formed by B. Alexander Oxborrow in 1870, they are a small, horse-mounted group of civilian militiamen who make it their business to strike at the things that go bump in the night. Trained in the knowings of how to deal with monsters, they are the ones you call when something is too weird to handle. They are claimed to possess talents that defy the abilities of normal men, as demonstrated by the tale of Oxborrow himself cutting a KeeWakw in half by himself with his trusted axe.

**Office of the Governor:** Overseen by Pauline Oxborrow since its inception in 1868, the Office of the Governor handles all civil affairs for the people of Hope. They handle the day-to-day affairs that keeps things running in Laramie, settle diplomatic concerns that arise between Laramie and its neighboring nations, maintain the peace, and prosecute criminals.

**Russell-Wainscott Imports:** This business venture took advantage of some of the early meetings with Cardiff delegates and secured themselves certain exclusive import-export rights. They're now the premier business venture in Laramie. They claim to be able to acquire anything from anywhere in the known world, provided the price is right. Despite multiple investigations, they have not been linked to any criminal activity in Laramie.

**The Laramie Leggers:** Formerly known as the Laramie Cricket Club, The Laramie Leggers organized themselves into a full-fledged team once they learned that the United Kingdom was still around. They issued a challenge to play in the U.K. Cricket League, but as of yet have received no reply.

**Sons of Laramie:** Mostly formed by young folk and political agitators, the Sons of Laramie advocate against any dealings with Cardiff. They have done little more than lead the occasional protest and vandalized a post here and there. At least they have a catchy slogan: "Laramie for Laramie, Cardiff Go Home!"

## OTHER NATIONS

**The United States of America:** They did not take too kindly to Laramie seceding from them. Given the chance, they will likely find a way to destroy everything you've worked hard to build. Assume that anyone from America is out to get you.

**The United Kingdom, The Roman Ascendancy:** Although there have been no dealings with them outside of dealing officially with Cardiff, many people from Laramie originally hailed from those nations (or Italy, as the case may be.) Some of your British and Roman constituents have come in handy with their grasp of steam technology and their invocations to angels, or whatever it is that they are spouting. It doesn't have to make sense, so long as their superstitions keep you safe and give you fresh water and the like.

**The People of New Lhasa, The People of the Land:** It's the same-ole, same-ole with them. One year you are all getting along, the next they have some bone to pick with you. You and they have a long history of butting heads in what amounts to a futile gesture. Will they try to get along with the people of Cardiff, or are they going to try their tricks on them?

**The People of Cardiff:** The arrival of people from the Cardiff Expeditions has brought new life into your community, with their new-fangled contraptions, clothing and other fancy gear. Although flashy, don't forget who you are and where you came from. Flash is fleeting, but family endures.

# CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Here is a list of common crimes and punishments in Fortress Laramie and the City of Hope:

**Horse Thieving:** To steal a horse or a herd from its rightful owner. (Hanging)

**Rustling:** To steal a herd of cattle from its rightful owner. (Hanging)

**Buffalo Hunting:** To hunt wild buffalo without owner. (1 year hard labor)

**Murder:** To end the life of another person, regardless of circumstance (Hanging)

**Attempted Murder:** Like Murder, but without success. (Banishment)

**Bank Robbery:** To rob resources or funds from an established bank. (10 years hard labor)

**Train Robbery:** To rob resources or funds from an active train. (10 years hard labor)

**Theft of an Official:** To rob resources or funds from someone who holds an official position of office, such as a sheriff, marshal or mayor. (Banishment)

**Grand Larceny:** The theft of resources or funds in excess of \$100.00, not counting horses or cattle. (1-3 years hard labor)

**Theft:** The theft of resources or funds under \$100.00, not counting horses or cattle. (1 week to 1 year hard labor)

**Drunk in Public:** Displays of egregious behavior while drunk. (Shunning or 1 month hard labor)

**Public Lewdness:** Appearance that promotes lewd behavior or otherwise considered indecent (Shunning or 1 month hard labor)

**Disorderly Conduct:** Behavior that causes a ruckus, such as roughhousing, bar fights and the like. (Shunning or 1 month of hard labor)

**Carrying a Weapon in a No-Weapon Zone:** Being armed in an area marked as a "No-Weapon Zone" by the authorities. (1 month hard labor)

Punishments unique to Fortress Laramie:

**Hard Labor:** The criminal has all of their personal property confiscated, which is turned over to the aggrieved party. They then served as indentured work for an assigned Clan or are conscripted into the Army of Laramie.

**Banishment:** The criminal is given a waterskin with water, two days worth of rations and banished from Fortress Laramie. The criminal will be hanged if he returns.

**Shunning:** The criminal must wear a yoke around their neck to mark them as shunned. No person of Laramie will lend them aid nor acknowledge their existence. If caught not wearing their yoke, or committing a crime, they will be hanged.



## CLOTHING AND STYLE



The people of Laramie have learned to make due with what little they had for so long. Most clothing work by people of Laramie is practical, with little flash or flair. Rough fabrics, unadorned leather and durable oilcloth is what you're most likely to see worn by people of Laramie. The only exception to this rule is in wearing something that was made with your own hands. If people from Laramie see you wearing fineries, they will assume that you are very handy and made it yourself. Otherwise, they will see you as soft and frivolous, having wasted so much to have someone else make that for you.

Working with what they had, the people of Laramie created some fantastic fusions of clothing from the different cultures. It is not uncommon to see someone wearing a duster and a top-hat, nor is it strange to see laborers wear conical *douli* hats with their overalls while they work. In fact, Clans whose families come from different cultural background will often create their own look, so that anyone who looks at them can recognize Clan members from a distance. To have your own look generally recognized is a great point of pride for the people of Laramie.

People of Laramie take great pride in wearing their second-hand clothing, or heirlooms that have been handed

down within their families or Clans. The more threadbare and patched-up an heirloom, the more prestige it earns, since it has a telltale history that can be told with each repair. By contrast, there is no greater social crime than to be caught with a stolen heirloom or, goodness forbid, a fake one. Only on a few occasions have people been caught faking an heirloom, which has always lead to tremendous disgrace to the offender's family or Clan.

Recently, with the advent of goods from Cardiff, people of Laramie have taken to wearing some accessories from the other side of the ocean. Some would call it trendy or vogue, while others would see it as frivolous or wasteful. In any case, social decorum can be maintained if the wearer purchases the good with something that they made with their own hands, as it shows a trade of work for like work. Thus, more and more flashy articles can be seen worn on the streets of Laramie, which is seen as glamorous by the young and as a threat by the old. The people of Laramie are nothing if not resilient, though, so they will certainly survive this dangerous new trend.

