



**Fort Gibson, established in the early 1800s, was among the first outposts in the region. Railways stretched into the territories along routes laid out by early surveyors.**



## **MILITARY FORTS**

**IN INDIAN TERRITORIES.** Meanwhile, the era after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 brought the U.S. Army and its engineers into the Indian Territories region, initially for defense. Fortifications and roads began appearing: Fort Smith, overlooking the Arkansas (1817); Fort Gibson, on the Grand and Arkansas Rivers, and Fort Towson, near the Kiamichi River (1824); and a major military road linking Forts Smith and Gibson (1827).

Land-based transportation routes augmented the waterway system that was the hub of the region's commerce. Most of the river traffic traveled on the Arkansas and Red Rivers, but only during seasons when they carried enough water for navigation.

By the mid 1800s, Fort Gibson and the whole Three Forks region bustled with trade serving the Indian Nations. Flatboats and keelboats were towed, warped, poled, and rowed along the natural flow of the Red-Ark waterways as far as water depth allowed.