ABOUT FORT CLARK & LEGENDS AT LAS MORAS

A Smithsonian Exhibition in a Place Where Southwest Texas History Happened

BRACKETTVILLE, TEXAS — Historic Fort Clark sits beside Las Moras Springs in Kinney County, about 30 miles north of the Rio Grande in Southwest Texas. Established by the U.S. Army in 1852, the post became intertwined with the development of Brackettville and with more than a century of military, cultural and community history along the Texas-Mexico border.

In 2026, that history provides the setting for Legends at Las Moras, a community-wide cultural experience accompanying the Smithsonian traveling exhibition *Spark! Places of Innovation*.

From Nov. 21, 2026 through Jan. 3, 2027, the Smithsonian exhibition and locally developed programming will bring together history, art, nature, military heritage, film, music, storytelling and innovation at historic Fort Clark and throughout the region.

ABOUT FORT CLARK

Fort Clark was established at Las Moras Springs on June 20, 1852, as part of a chain of U.S. Army posts across the Texas frontier.

Its location was strategic. Las Moras Springs provided a dependable source of water along routes connecting San Antonio, the Rio Grande and points west. The site had been important to people long before the establishment of the military post, with archaeological evidence documenting thousands of years of human activity around the springs. The Army post became closely connected with the settlement that grew nearby and eventually became Brackettville.

During its long military history, Fort Clark was associated with infantry, mounted troops and cavalry units and with figures and events that shaped the history of Southwest Texas and the borderlands.

Black Seminole Scouts and Buffalo Soldiers

Among the most significant chapters of Fort Clark's history is its association with the Black Seminole Scouts, also historically known as Seminole Negro Indian Scouts.

Black Seminole Scouts began serving at Fort Clark in the 1870s. Their knowledge of the region, languages and tracking made them particularly valuable to the U.S. Army during military campaigns along the Texas-Mexico border.

Four Black Seminole Scouts, Adam Payne, Isaac Payne, Pompey Factor and John Ward, received the Medal of Honor. Fort Clark was also associated with African American Army units commonly known as the Buffalo Soldiers, including the 10th U.S. Cavalry and the 24th and 25th U.S. Infantry. The Black Seminole community remains an important part of Brackettville's living cultural heritage today.

From Frontier Post to Cavalry Station

As the frontier changed, so did Fort Clark. The post expanded substantially during the late 19th century, leaving behind many of the limestone buildings that continue to define Fort Clark's historic landscape.

Fort Clark later became particularly associated with mounted cavalry. During the 20th century, the post was home to the 5th Cavalry, and future Gen. George S. Patton Jr. served there before World War II. With the mechanization of the Army and the declining role of horse cavalry, Fort Clark was closed in 1944, ending more than nine decades as a U.S. military installation.

Today, much of the historic post remains recognizable, including officers' quarters, military buildings, the parade ground and other structures associated with generations of soldiers and families who lived there. The Fort Clark Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

LAS MORAS SPRINGS

Fort Clark's story begins with water. Las Moras Springs is a major natural spring whose waters form Las Moras Creek. Archaeological evidence around the springs documents human activity stretching back thousands of years.

Indigenous peoples, Spanish explorers, travelers, soldiers and settlers all used the springs long before and after Fort Clark was established. The U.S. Army eventually developed the spring area for recreation. A spring-fed swimming pool constructed during the Army era remains one of Fort Clark's most recognizable features.

The springs provide a natural connection between the landscape, wildlife, human settlement and history of the region — themes that will be explored throughout Legends at Las Moras.

ABOUT LEGENDS AT LAS MORAS

Legends at Las Moras is the local companion exhibition and community celebration developed around the Smithsonian's *Spark! Places of Innovation* exhibition at Fort Clark.

Its purpose is simple:
Tell Southwest Texas stories where they happened.

Through exhibits, presentations, tours, performances, demonstrations and community events, Legends at Las Moras will explore the people, places, traditions and ideas that shaped Fort Clark, Kinney County and the surrounding region. Rather than presenting history as something finished, the project asks visitors to consider how communities continually adapt, solve problems, preserve traditions and reinterpret their own stories.

Programming is organized around six broad themes:

Nov. 21–25 — Animals, Land, Nature & Wildlife
The landscape, Las Moras Springs, wildlife, ranching, conservation and the natural environment.

Nov. 26–Dec. 2 — Arts, Culture & Connection
Regional artists, architecture, cultural traditions, student art and the ways people use creative expression to understand a place.

Dec. 3–9 — Military Heritage & Defense
Fort Clark's military history, cavalry, Black Seminole Scouts, Buffalo Soldiers and the generations of military families connected to the post.

Dec. 10–16 — Community & Celebration
The traditions, gatherings, food, holidays and community institutions that have brought people together.

Dec. 17–24 — Film, Theater, Music & Storytelling
Southwest Texas film history, Alamo Village, music, oral histories, home movies and the stories communities preserve and pass down.

Dec. 26–Jan. 3 — Technology, Innovation & Bold Ideas
Aviation, transportation, medicine, technology and the ideas that have changed life in Southwest Texas.

ABOUT *SPARK! PLACES OF INNOVATION*

Spark! Places of Innovation is a traveling Smithsonian exhibition presented through “Museum on Main Street,” a Smithsonian program created to bring exhibitions, educational resources and programming to small towns and rural communities.

The exhibition examines an idea that is particularly relevant to rural America: innovation doesn't happen only in major cities, laboratories or technology companies. It can happen anywhere people identify a problem, imagine something different and work together to make an idea possible.

Spark! explores the relationship between people, place and innovation and invites communities to examine examples of creativity and problem-solving in their own histories.

At Fort Clark, that national conversation becomes distinctly local. Legends at Las Moras connects *Spark!* with stories of adaptation and ingenuity shaped by the realities of the Southwest Texas landscape: water, distance, climate, military necessity, ranching, transportation, culture and community.

WHY FORT CLARK?

Few places provide a setting quite like this one. Visitors will experience a Smithsonian exhibition while standing within a historic military post beside a spring that has drawn people to the same location for thousands of years.

They can walk among historic military buildings, explore the landscape around Las Moras Springs, encounter local art and history, hear directly from historians, artists and community members, and consider how a remote Southwest Texas community fits within a much larger American story.

That combination is at the heart of Legends at Las Moras:
National stories. Local history. Told where it happened.

QUICK FACTS

Location: Historic Fort Clark, Brackettville, Kinney County, Texas

Fort Clark established: June 20, 1852

LEGENDS AT LAS MORAS

Smithsonian exhibition: *Spark! Places of Innovation*

Exhibition dates: Nov. 21, 2026–Jan. 3, 2027

Local companion program: Legends at Las Moras

Presented through: Smithsonian Museum on Main Street

Website: LegendsAtLasMoras.com

Media contact:
annabell@kinneycountypost.com

Interviews, historical information, high-resolution photographs, advance visits and additional media resources are available upon request.