

Meet Robert Hall Chilton



Real People! Real Stories!

Santa Fe Trail Hall of Fame

Robert Hall Chilton

(1815 – 1879)

- Graduate of West Point, 1837
- Officer in the U.S. Army during the Mexican War
- Brig. Gen. in CSA during the American Civil War
- Chief of Staff to Robert E. Lee
- Presided over several treaty negotiations, including the Treaty of Ft. Laramie, Ft. Kearney and Ft. Atkinson

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Robert Hall Chilton, a native of Loudoun County, Virginia, was born on February 25, 1815, and was graduated from West Point in the class of 1837 and brevetted as a Second Lieutenant and was assigned to the 1st Regiment of Dragoons for western frontier duty. He served in the Mexican War under General Taylor. As a captain of dragoons he won the brevet of major for gallantry in Mexico. He was headquartered at Fort Leavenworth and was charged with the task of protecting the trails.

Major Chilton was military chief at the Fort Laramie Treaty with the Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Snake, Crow and Blackfoot Indian tribes.

He was very active in guarding the Santa Fe Trail and was the officer in charge with Indian Agent Thomas Fitzpatrick at the Fort Atkinson Treaty of 1853, with the Kiowa, Comanche and Plains Apache Indians.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Major Chilton resigned from the U.S. Army and served commendably as chief of staff to General Robert E. Lee, an old friend, and as inspector general of the Army of Northern Virginia; his appointment as brigadier was not confirmed by the Senate until February 16, 1864. The following April he was relieved from duty in the field at his own request and assigned to duty in the department in Richmond, in charge of the inspection branch, where he continued until the close of the war.

Chilton married Laura Mason, daughter of the Attorney General of the United States, in 1845 and had three children. After the war, Chilton was president of a manufacturing company in Columbus, Georgia. He died there on February 18, 1879 and is buried in Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond.

Major Chilton is honored with a monument for the years he spent protecting the trails in Chilton Park in Dodge City, Kansas, which was dedicated May 28, 1931. This quote is from the program for the dedication of that monument: "Beacon Hill, the property east of the monument in Chilton Park, from whose eminence water flows northward to the Pawnee, was an old Indian signal point and videttes (mounted sentinels) from Chilton's camp stood there on guard."