

# Fort Concho Dispatch Winter 2019

As 2019 comes to a close, I hope this issue finds you looking forward to another great year. Since Fall alone, Fort Concho has had over 2,000 children come through the fort to learn the history of the chapel/schoolhouse, the fort, and 19th century life.

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Three—volley salute for Veterans on Veterans Day Fairmont Cemetery, San Angelo, Texas

"I go into my library and all history unrolls before me." - Alexander Smith

Broene enjoying the lovely weather at this year's Christmas at Old Fort Concho



*Anna Preston* HEADQUARTERS  
**FORT CONCHO**  
*Frontier Fort & Museum*

639 S. OAKES STREET  
SAN ANGELO, TEXAS 76903-7013

## Keeping up with the Reenactors



November 16th concluded the Angelo State Home Football games. This was a great year for Angelo State and we fired around forty rounds of black powder. It is safe to say that Angelo State went out with a boom!

This year, we were invited to a special flag football game: Navy vs. Army. At the game, Army lost but many soldiers learned some history about their branch. Soldiers were curious and asked reenactors many questions about 19th century frontier life. The howitzer definitely was used this season as we also took it to the Veterans' Day Memorial at Fairmont Cemetery. The reenactors also joined the SCV gentlemen for the three volley fire at the ceremony.

We will hold a training class on 18 April 2020 to allow new reenactors to join our program. We will have a class on 19th century soldier life. After classroom time, we will go to the parade ground to put to practice what we have learned!

### Meet our newest member of Fort Concho!

Leslie Marshall is from Del Rio and moved to San Angelo after a short time in Arizona. She has worked as a COSA employee and also at DeCoty. However, we are lucky enough to now call her our Animal Program Coordinator. She first started riding at three years old with her grandfather. As she grew older, equines became a major part of her life. She told me that this was actually her dream job. Working with horses and mules comes naturally to her and she does not feel like she is working when she is out in the pens.

Part of her inspiration is a 19th century lady. Calamity Jane was a strong frontier woman who drove wagons, broke horses, was a friend of Buffalo Bill, and an army scout for multiple forts.

We cannot wait to see what excitement Leslie is going to bring to the fort.



Leslie and Barney taking a barn selfie!



# Christmas At Old Fort Concho



This year's Christmas event kicked off with a boom! The weather could not have been any more perfect as the reenactors came in to set up Thursday evening. On Friday, 1200 children arrived at Fort Concho for Students' Day. After watching the 38 star flag rise over the field, the students set out to see what they could learn about the 19th century arms. They enjoyed Christmas carols at the chuck wagon with K.R. Woods, aka Camp Cookie. They met a buffalo hunter and learned of his trade. The Confederate camp introduced them to the mid-century army and our living history reenactors let them see the changes that came after the war. Chief Broken Eagle enlightened them about the ways of the Indians. Civilian camps showed them that the army was not just about fighting, but living on the frontier as well.

On Saturday, Fort Concho came to life with hourly firing of the artillery pieces and shooting of the Gatling gun. At 2PM, we had a gun and cannon salute and a moment of silence for one of our fellow reenactors, Mike Bitner, who had recently passed away. Saturday also marked Pearl Harbor Memorial Day and in a fitting fashion the band played the Naval Hymn, Eternal Father, Strong to Save at evening colors.

New displays were shown at this years' event. Harold Johnston, the unit commander of 7th Texas Infantry, brought a unique element to the traditional artillery fire.

As artillery has to wait three minutes in between each round, 7th Texas slipped between the pieces and fired as they would have in a traditional battle line.

Sunday, the weather warmed up to an unusual 80 degrees. It proved a nice, relaxing day with lots of good camaraderie and Christmas cheer before wishing good friends farewell until next Christmas at Old Fort Concho! (We expect to see you all back next year December 4-6, 2020! Bring friends!)



David helping a whole new team of artillery folks.



Conrad in his natural element



Ron, King, and Dan all on the 3" Ordnance Rifle



Rick representing cavalry



Quick thinking led to a beautiful ceremony on Pearl Harbor Memorial Day

## History Resurfacing

### A History of the 16th U.S. Infantry Regiment During the Indian Wars period (1865-1891)

Written by: Harold W. Johnston

When the American Civil War ended, the nation focused its attention on westward expansion and southern reconstruction. “After the cessation of hostilities between the states, the U.S. Army had an immediate need to demobilize its huge wartime army of nearly 2 million men. By 1867 the U.S. Army had been reduced down to 56,815 officers and men.<sup>1</sup> In 1869 The U.S. Army was again reduced to an aggregate total of 28,764 officers and men. To achieve this figure, forty-five infantry regiments were cut to twenty-five.”<sup>2</sup>

## 16th Infantry History continued...

Under this new reorganization, the twenty-five infantry regiments were numbered 1 through 25 (w/ the 24th and 25th consisting of buffalo soldiers.) Each regiment would contain ten companies. A company would consist of approximately forty men at maximum strength. The ten companies of each regiment were designated by letters A through K with no letter J...

...On March 3, 1869, two Civil War units were merged to create the 16th Infantry Regiment. The old 34th Infantry had fought in Shiloh, Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge, and Atlanta. The 34th was combined with the old 11th Infantry Regiment that fought at Bull Run, Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, and Petersburg. The newly created 16th Infantry's first duties were non-glamorous. Reconstruction duty was not an ideal assignment. The army served as a police force that enforced civil law and order within the states of the old Confederacy. Post-wartime emotions and tensions between the races made reconstruction duty unpleasant as well as hazardous.<sup>3</sup>

Several times the regiment was called to quell social unrest. Companies B, E, F, G, I, and K marched through Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina to suppress the activities of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK.) "In 1876, all companies except H were concentrated in New Orleans during the Packard-Nichols troubles due to civil unrest."<sup>4</sup> Although its reconstruction role was generally unappreciated, the 16th Infantry Regiment carried out its duties in a military manner...

...In late 1880 the 16th infantry regiment was ordered to Texas. The regiment was moved by train . Originally Companies D,E,G,H, and K were assigned to Fort McKavett. Companies A, B, C, and I were to go to Fort Concho. Company F was to go to San Antonio, which was regimental HQ. Shortly after arriving in San Antonio, Company F was ordered on to Fort Concho. They were met at Ben Ficklin by the 10th Cavalry Band as a welcoming gesture.

From time to time various companies of the 16th Infantry regiment were rotated in and out of Forts such as Concho, Stockton, Davis, and McKavett. They also manned sub-posts around Fort Concho at Camp Elizabeth on the North Concho River, Camp Charlotte on the Middle Concho River, and Grierson's Spring near Big Lake. They scouted and patrolled around all of these forts and camps.

From August 1882 until June 1887, regimental headquarters was maintained at Fort Concho. While stationed at Fort Concho, the 16th installed poles for telegraph linking Davis, Stockton, and Concho. Company F built some of the stone structures... They also completed a stone officers' quarters... They built a road from Colorado City where the railroad brought supplies in the 1880s to Camp Elizabeth and on over to Camp Charlotte. Co. and I were assigned as guards of a Texas and Pacific Railway as it was being built in West Texas.

Life at Fort Concho was not always dull for its soldiers. Shortly after arriving at the post, the men of the 16th infantry discovered the little town across the river called San Angelo. The town at the time consisted mainly of saloons where buffalo hunters, cowboys, card players, prostitutes, and other lawless types congregated. The saloons were rough places where shootings were quite frequent among soldiers and civilians alike. In early 1881, within a ten day span, a soldier from Co. F 16th infantry and a buffalo soldier from Co. E 10th Cavalry were shot and killed in San Angelo saloons. The January 21, 1881, addition of the Galveston news reported the first killing:

## 16th Infantry History continued...

January 20 San Angelo, the town opposite of Ft. Concho, has again been made the scene of an unprovoked and willful murder. The murder occurred in a saloon kept by John Nasworthy, alias, Sargent, last night. The victim was T. Pinder, a soldier of Company F, 16th infantry. The murderer is P.G. Watson, a gambler. Watson had just arrived on the stage, and going into the saloon got into an altercation with the soldier of the 10th cavalry, and was in the act of hitting the soldier with his revolver when Pinder interfered, requesting him not to hit the man. Watson turned and deliberately shot Pinder through the heart. His friends mounted him on a racehorse, and he left town, no one lifting a hand to prevent his escape, though several sit around who might easily have captured him.<sup>5</sup>

Ten days later a quiet and inoffensive soldier name William Watkins of Company E, 10th Cavalry was shot and killed by a civilian name Thomas McCarthy. Watkins was killed in front of Wilson's saloon. Although a large crowd was inside with people coming and going, the soldier laid dead for some time before it was reported. When the sheriff and constable arrived, no one claimed they knew anything. McCarthy was arrested later while leaving town.

The soldiers at Fort Concho were furious. Additional sentries were posted and a series of rollcall checks were establish by Colonel Grierson to keep angry soldiers within the confines of the fort.

The first rollcall check shortly after taps found a large body of men were absent. They had pried open their arm racks and gone into town fully armed. The February 11, 1881 edition of *San Antonio Express* carried a reprint of the story first published by the *Concho Times* of San Angelo:

“Shortly after 9 o'clock that night and armed body of soldiers, white and black, made their appearance, all at once, near the calaboose. The mob as near as could be counted, were 130 strong, well armed with government guns and many of the white men had blackened faces. Not finding the prisoners in the calaboose, they will next march down to Mrs. Tankersley's hotel, where they stayed sometime demanding the man who killed the soldier. Failing to find him here or there he took the sheriff, Jay. D. Spears, under guard and told him to produce the man that killed that soldier or his own life would pay the forfeit. They then went to the Nimitz hotel and other places along the main street, declaring they would have a man or destroy the town. They halted everyone who attempted to go near them and warned all that if a single shot was far they would cut the town. This date of things continued about two hours, when Lieutenant Eggleston came from the post with a guard, and at once, upon seeing them, the mob disbursed in double quick order without a shot of having been fired.”<sup>6</sup>

The white 16th Infantry man, having black in their face for disguise, made some people think that only the black soldiers of the 10th Cavalry and were involved. The rollcall check on post during the event show that many men from both all white 16th Infantry and all black 10th Cavalry were jointly involved in seizing the town of San Angelo.

## Sources:

1 Randall, J.G. and David Donald. The Civil War and Reconstruction. Lexington, Ma.: D.C. Heath & Co., 1969. p. 538.

2 Richards, William V. “Sixteenth Regiment of Infantry.” In Theodore F Rodenbough and William H. Haskin, The Army of the United States, 1789-1896. (New York: Argonaut Press, 1966, p. 630

3 Richards, p. 630

4 Ibid.

5 Kelton, Elmer. Looking Back West. San Angelo, TX: Talley Press, 1973. p. 49.

6 Ibid. p. 52-53.

Would you like to be featured in Fort Concho's



Dispatch? We are looking for short pieces that discuss unique historical elements on the western frontier. Fort Concho is a western frontier fort.

However, the history involving the fort goes much wider than the military. Civilian life, buffalo hunting, Native American culture, and much more are elements that will be included in the Dispatch. Legends and their origins are also welcome. Please email [livinghistory@fortconcho.com](mailto:livinghistory@fortconcho.com) if you would like to be featured. (Please include sources.)

## Upcoming Events for 2020 at Fort Concho:

1. February 1– Rodeo Parade
2. February 7, 8, & 9—Loyal Train Artillery class
3. February 23— Buffalo Soldier Heritage Day
4. March 13-15—Frontier Lady Living History Symposium
5. April 18—Join the 19th century Infantry
6. April 22-26 Regional Cavalry Competition
7. April 25– Frontier Day at Fort Concho
8. May 1-3—Cowboy Way Jubilee
9. May 16—Armed Forces Day at Fort Concho
10. May 22-23—Buffalo Soldier Symposium



THANK YOU!!!

Thank you so much to all the reenactors who came out to this year's Christmas at Old Fort Concho Winter Rendezvous. We shook the ground with the artillery, wowed the folks with all of the horses and displays, and allowed for unique educational opportunities.



This dispatch was created by your local, friendly Corporal, Sarah Ross. I hope you stay safe in your travels during this holiday season!

