

Fort Concho Dispatch

Summer and Fall 2020

San Angelo, TX, Fort Concho National Historic Landmark

October 1, 2020



The photo above is taken on July 4, 2020, by Roger Banks.

July 4th Celebration

Though there were no fireworks at the fort, the howitzer went through 4.5 pounds of black powder for Independence Day shooting hourly.

The photo below shows the buffalo soldiers who represented both Goodfellow and Fort Concho at our September event. (See page 3 for details.) Conrad McClure taught them how to march as a 19th century soldier. These men are currently serving in the United States Air Force and we thank them for the service both to Fort Concho and our nation.



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Fort Concho is open for self guided tours. Come see us 7 days a week.

Monday through Saturday we are open from 9AM– 5PM and 1PM– 5PM on Sunday.

As of June 29th, we are requiring masks to enter buildings.



Pictures from Goodfellow AFB are provided by Matt Woodworth Photography and Seraiah Wolf. Any additional photos are by Roger Banks and Fort Concho staff members.

<https://www.facebook.com/MattWoodworthPhotography/>

Christmas at Old Fort Concho

As you probably already have seen, Christmas at Old Fort Concho will not be taking place this year. Even as San Angelo, sees an improvement with cases, we cannot safely host the large numbers we expect every year. Hopefully, next year will be better.

This does not mean we will not have living history events. Our current plan is to host smaller scale events before the end of the year. As soon as details are finalized, we will be posting about them on our social media. (Are you following us on Facebook? If not here is a plug: our page is Fort Concho National Historic Landmark.)



Museum Day 2020

On the beautiful Saturday of September 26th, Fort Concho and the other museums of San Angelo hosted Museum Day. This year's went with a bang as over 200 guest visited! Bob Broene spoke with the crowds about mortars and their history while Fort Concho had a display about the different uniforms worn when we were an active post. Between the artillery firings and the displays, the guest had an opportunity to visit with living historians about stories of the western frontier.

Angelo State Football

One of Fort Concho's yearly traditions is firing the howitzer at Angelo State's home football games. Earlier this year it was announced they would not be having a football season and while we were disappointed, we understood.

Happily, we heard the decision had been reversed and we were pleasantly surprised by an email sent out just over a week before the game, Fort Concho was invited to fire at their first home game. Excited, we went out to the game. The game followed the Museum Day event and the gun crew was well prepared and mentally in sync.

During the 4th quarter Angelo State scored their fourth touchdown. Going into action quickly, our gun crew loaded and prepped the howitzer. When the field goal was kicked, whether it is good or not, we fire. Prepared, we waited. There was only a couple of minutes left of the game but suddenly we realized something was wrong. They reversed the call! So in the final minutes of the game, we had a loaded piece and no reason to shoot it. Generally, we do not fire at the conclusion of the game but we decided we were not going to fish out the round and chance losing our fingers. Instead, we fired the round at the conclusion of the game, celebrating Angelo States win 21-10. Thank you for having us, Angelo State!



Fort Concho Celebrates Diversity with Goodfellow AFB, Texas

Goodfellow AFB contacted Fort Concho in mid August with a grand idea! We had celebrated Buffalo Soldier Day July 28th and caught the attention of their command team. They wanted to share the Army's history of diversity and progressive ideals with the new students at Goodfellow.

They asked Fort Concho to create and host a living history program, celebrating diversity and the Buffalo Soldiers. Over a series of a few weeks, the program went from being a small event with just a few units to a presentation for the entire base. We could not have been more excited. The program also became an opportunity to celebrate the Air Force's 73rd birthday. The program began with posting of the colors. Goodfellow had a color guard post the 50 star flag and then Fort Concho's 10th Cavalry, Company A posted the 38 star flag. Sarah Ross gave a talk about the history of Buffalo Soldiers and the significance of their service to the Army. King Walker led our living history team with a three volley salute. Base commander, Col. Nazario, gave a talk on the significance of military's progress and what Buffalo Soldiers history means to the military today.

Following the program, the Air Force served breakfast and the wing was allowed stay to watch as Fort Concho shot artillery and talked with living historians about the equipment they brought. Fort



Concho staff and volunteers encouraged permanent party to consider joining the program for future living history events.

Considering how isolated these past couple of months have been, it was fun to finally get out and speak with people about the history of our community and the Army. Maybe this can become something we will do more often in the future?

Thank you to everyone who came out! This program would not have been a success without you all.

For additional photos or to view a video of the event:

<https://www.goodfellow.af.mil/Newsroom/Article-Display/Article/2355273/goodfellow-members-buffalo-soldier-re-enactors-celebrate-air-force-birthday/>

<https://www.facebook.com/17thTrainingWing/videos/2766448286950638/>



The Black Regulars : Book Review by Sarah Ross

Dobak, William A., and Thomas D. Phillips. *The Black Regulars, 1866-1898*. Norman, Okla: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001.

Published in 2001, *The Black Regulars* presents an updated view of the social history of the black soldiers and tells comprehensive stories of the first generation of African Americans allowed into the United States (U.S.) Army during peacetime. (p. xi) William A. Dobak and Thomas D. Phillips challenge current scholarship by providing a well-written new perspective in their work *The Black Regulars*. Challenging previously accepted facts and the sheer volume of individual stories in this book helps historians more critically interpret the life of black regulars on the western frontier. Most black regulars could not read or write. (pg. 8) Because of the troops illiteracy, the authors used court records, army records, and officer diaries to tell their stories. Since there is limited quality literature on “buffalo soldiers” in years past, the authors filled a gapped in historians’ knowledge.

The authors seek to tell the story of the enlisted black regulars in a new way to show the Army was ahead of the civilians in the sense of racial equality. (p. 280) Though both white and black soldiers served on the western frontier, the authors focus on telling the story of black enlisted men in the face of: both fabricated and genuine mutiny; the struggles to educate soldiers left illiterate by pre-Civil War legislation; desertion (although it was lower among black regiments) (p. 62); the dull everyday life in garrisons and how they chose to spend their money; the behavior of soldiers and poor decisions they made including gambling and drinking; attempts to surmount biases held by white men in the Army; and the injustice faced when they retired from the Army.

Dobak and Phillips filled the void of written histories with this comprehensive book by focusing more on the story of enlisted black regulars Army life than their campaigns. *The Black Regulars* does not read like a sensational campaign history such as William H. Leckie’s *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West*, but rather as a direct history that acknowledges the lack of records given by soldiers themselves. Michael Tate, in a book review on *The Black Regulars*, also notes that the book did not focus on the tactics and campaigns as Leckie and others covered, but rather focused on the soldiers themselves.¹ Other books, such as *Voices of Buffalo Soldiers* by Frank N. Schubert, cover this perspective of black regulars in the Army but not to the same extent. By using court-martial records, as well as other military records, the authors were able to capture the thoughts of not only the black regulars but also those of their white officers.

The life of the black regular was mundane and often uneventful. The Army initially dedicated six units for the enlistment of African Americans in 1866. The six units became four units with the reorganization of the Army and the final configuration became two cavalry units and two infantry units: 9th and 10th Cavalry, 24th and 25th Infantry. The Army and the U.S. government invested a large sum of money and supplies in the

experiment and handpicked officers who would help make the project successful. (p. 4) Beginning with the enlistment process, Dobak and Phillips provide insights into what was taking place in the government with the Republicans and Democrats that led to the government allowing African Americans into the Army. The laying of the foundation allows the reader to explore the different aspects of the life of a soldier.

African Americans had joined the U.S. Army before this experiment, but did not receive equality in pay or social status as to their white counterparts. On the western frontier, the only difference between a white and black regular regiment was each black regiment had a chaplain to provide education for the soldiers. (p. xv) Considering the social climate of the nineteenth century, this was quite forward-thinking. Historians long argued that the high reenlistment rate and low desertion rate was due to the superior soldiering skills of the black regulars. Dobak and Phillips show evidence to the contrary. (p. xvii)

Referring to a black regular as a buffalo soldier is a part of a common narrative given as they were supposedly named by local tribes after the brave and sacred buffalo, and they wore the title buffalo soldier as a badge of honor.² However, the authors propose that the only people who used this term were journalists and instead it was an insulting term in the ranks. (P. 231) This book will challenge the reader's preconceived notions of African Americans joining the army. Tate also notes the authors challenge "long-cherished notions" including questioning whether the black regiments faced as much discrimination as previous historians have maintained.³ This is not to say there was no discrimination but "military necessity, more than any other factor, brought the two races together." (pg. 87) The Army saw a soldier to be used for labor, not a black or white man.

The Black Regulars is a book worth opening when trying to understand life on the western frontier. These historians have made such a wide impact with this book that leading western frontier historians, including Douglas McChristian, cite *The Black Regulars*.⁴ Challenging previous scholarship that "buffalo soldiers" were inadequately supplied and racially subjected with the sheer volume of individual stories in this book helps historians interpret the life of black regulars on the western frontier.

1) Michael L. Tate, review of *The Black Regulars, 1866-1898*, By William A. Dobak and Thomas D. Phillips, *The Journal of Southern History* 69, no. 3 (August 2003): 718, doi:10.2307/30040062.718.

2) William H. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West*. Norman, Okla: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967

3) Tate, *The Black Regulars*, 719.

4) Douglas C. McChristian, *Regular Army O!: Soldiering on the Western Frontier, 1865-1891*. Norman, Okla: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019. 628.

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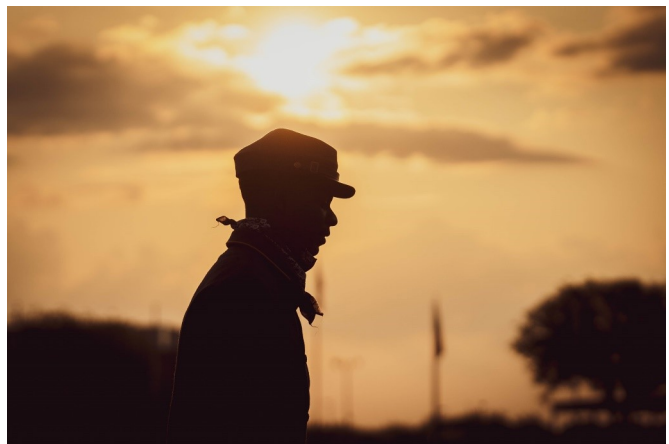
Would you like to be featured in Fort Concho's



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 if you would like to be featured. (Please include sources.)



Upcoming Events for 2020 at Fort Concho:

Murder Mystery at Fort Concho- October 24th

Additional programs to be announced! Be sure to follow our social media so you can keep up with the latest!



This dispatch was created by your local, friendly Corporal, Sarah Ross.

Be sure to follow us on all of our social media!



-Fort Concho National Historic Landmark



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