

Fall 2021 issue, released September 2021

Fort Concho Dispatch

San Angelo, TX, Fort Concho National Historic Landmark

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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 March 10th, we no longer require masks to enter buildings. Masks are still recommended!



Above: David Johnson with the howitzer as fireworks go off for the Independence day celebration in San Angelo, TX.

Above right: Fort Concho Buffalo Soldier troop leading the Juneteenth parade on MLK in San Angelo, TX

Right: Paul Cook, David Johnson, Henry Crawford, and Sarah Ross posing before the Juneteenth Parade.





Campfire Story Night

Campfire Story Night was created in 2020 with the goal of a summer series but the entire landscape of normal changed. With shifts back to normal back in May, we decided to bring the program back as a summer series in 2021. The stories told included that of the Drexel Mission Fight, Kiowa and Comanche Oral Histories, Birdie Cooper adventures, and cowboy adventures in West Texas. We also were joined by friends from Heritage Park, Rhett from Fort McKavett and local historian, Joe Weaver. The guests had fun as we told stories you cannot simply find on the internet, while also eating s'mores! We pull our stories from primary sources and legends in Fort Concho archives that were spread by soldiers and Native Americans in the nineteenth century. We look forward to hosting this program again in 2022.



Flag Day

The Department of Defense suggest the best day to retire American flags is on Flag, June 14th. Fort Concho participated this year by teaching the local community about proper procedures to follow as indicated in US Code #4. Boy Scouts from the area joined us to help in giving the American flag it's final respect before retirement. The younger cub scouts had yet to learn how to fold an American flag properly so they took this moment to teach that as well for and we had them fold each flag.



Left: Nathan Gammage, joined by Charles and Woody for a photo

Below: Charles and Woody giving their talk.

Buffalo Soldier Day

Buffalo Soldier Day, July 28th, celebrates congress passing legislation allowing African Americans to join the Army in specially designated regiments for both the Cavalry and Infantry. This year was the 155th birthday. To help us celebrate, we were joined by Charles Young and Woody of the Territory of Arizona Buffalo Soldiers Program. The 344th MI Battalion also assisted by providing the flag detail for evening colors. Following the ceremony, the public joined our special guests for a talk and meet and greet with Woody and Charles. Woody provided his immense knowledge on Army weaponry and gear while Charles provided larger than life stories as a living historian and together they brought history to life! We look forward to hosting them again for future programs.



Ft. McKavett “By the Number”

Fort Concho Living History troops participated in Ft. McKavett’s living history program over the Labor Day weekend. Rhett Kearns, the new educator at Fort McKavett, put on a splendid event as he trained troops in drill, cooked a hardy 1850s style meal, and made sure we all had what we needed to be as historically accurate as possible.

The ladies of Fort Concho also joined for this program. They stayed in Officer Quarters 10 and interpreted on the front porch. The ladies are working on a block quilt that can be used for laundress interpretations in the winter and will lay on the bed of OQ6 of Fort Concho for officers’ family interpretations.

Below: Rhett Kearns leading a bayonet drill with Ehren and Francisco.

Right: Sharon Baird teaching ladies about watercolor, an acceptable practice for ladies in the nineteenth century



Museum Day (UPCOMING!)

Our Living History troops will be assisting in hosting Fort Concho’s Museum Day, September 18, 2021. The buildings will be outfitted with docents and the ladies living historians will sit on the porch of Barracks 1. The ladies will be continuing the quilt started back at Ft. McKavett.

Museum Day will be all day. The docents and troops will be there from 10AM to 3PM.

Women’s Living History Symposium

Sharon Baird hosted Frontier Women’s Living History Association’s Symposium at Fort Concho. The ladies learned more skills to interpret for living history while also having a grand ol’ time. The ladies embroidered, painted with watercolor, had tea, practice nineteenth century dances, and hand sewed quilt square pot holders. The program’s featured guest speaker, Paula Perry, discussed the heartbreak one family experienced during the Civil War. We look forward to hosting these ladies again next March!



Women’s Living History at Fort Concho is BACK!

Women went out into the middle of nowhere following the troops. They did not have the right to vote and barely had the right to property and were the dependents of the military. Their lives were shaped by the military but they also shaped many aspects of the military. Their story should be told too. So, in order to meet that goal, Fort Concho has begun recruiting new ladies to join the troops in interpretation. Fort Concho already has a ladies program and these younger ladies can learn from those who have been in the field for a while. We look forward to begin a new era of interpretation so new ones can get involved as well.

Christmas at Old Fort Concho's Winter Rendezvous

December 3rd, 4th, & 5th, 2021

Dear Friends,

Holiday season is quickly approaching! The Board of Directors and the staff of Fort Concho National Historic Landmark wish to invite you to participate in **Christmas at Old Fort Concho's Winter Rendezvous** taking place during the first weekend of December.

Christmas at Old Fort Concho's schedule:

Friday, December 3rd from 3:00 pm till 8:00 pm.

Saturday, December 4th from 9:00 am till 7:00 pm.

Sunday, December 5th from 11:00 am till 4:00 pm

Christmas at Old Fort Concho is the fort's largest fundraiser. This event allows for our doors to stay open throughout the year. Teaching people about the history of the fort and the impact the history has on our nation is why we ask for your support. Also, coming out to this event is always a fun time and a great way to be involved in our community. The Winter Rendezvous is a major portion of the Christmas event.

The goal of the Winter Rendezvous is to present an authentic, educational and exciting display of military and civilian people, equipment and activities. We are inviting quality, authentic re-enactors and living historians to stage a winter camp on our historic parade ground.

Registration forms for both Living History Volunteers and Sutlers have been provided in the additional attachment of your Dispatch email. For planning purposes we ask that you return your form **by November 19, 2021**. All participants have free admission to the grounds for the entire weekend. In addition, we have completely altered the way the Field Kitchen is operated. See additional sheet for more information.

We will provide all individuals and groups with: firewood, water, camp sites, and hay for livestock. **Fires must be in a fire ring or box.** If needed, Fort Concho has a limited amount of rings on a first come first served basis. Please make your request on the included registration form.

We will be hosting a "Students' Day" again this year on Friday, December 3rd. Students will rotate through the grounds from 9am to 11am and from 12pm to 2pm. Please indicate on your registration form if you are interested in participating.

Please mail your registration form to:

C@OFC Rendezvous, Fort Concho NHL
630 S. Oakes, San Angelo, TX 76903

For more information:

Call (325) 650-3161

E-mail: livinghistory@fortconcho.com

Special note: We are excited and hope you will join us for the Christmas at Old Fort Concho 2021 event weekend. As you all are well aware, COVID has taken a turn that has affected us all. According to the current CDC guidelines, it is *recommended* that everyone should wear masks and be vaccinated when in contact with others. There are no legal grounds for this recommendation in the state of Texas at this time. In an attempt to continue the safety of both our community and guests, we encourage you to follow the guidelines. As new information and guidelines are released, details are subjected to change. If you have questions or concerns in regard to COVID or the vaccines available, please consult:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Loyal Train Artillery

Loyal Train Chapter of the USFAA will be putting on a School of the piece October 1 through 3, 2021. The school will be held at Fort Concho NHL, in San Angelo, TX. The cost to attend the school will be \$50.00 if you pre-register and \$55.00 if you wait and register on Friday October 1st at the classroom stables on Henry O. Flipper Drive.

- Friday, October 1, sign in and assigned barracks if you need sleeping arrangements. Plus a light supper around 6:00pm. Registration is from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.
- Saturday, October 2, Breakfast served between 8:00 am to 9:00 am. Classroom 9:00 am to 5:00 pm lunch will be provided at noon. A chicken fried steak supper with all the sides will be served at 6:00 pm at OQ 8
- Sunday, October 3, breakfast served between 8:00 am to 9:00 am. Field work will be until noon then a lunch will be provide and certificates and carry cards will be handed out during lunch. At that time a lunch will be provided and certificate and carry cards will be handed out and the school of the piece will conclude at 2:00 pm Loyal Train Vice President, Major Ray Johnson.

Preregistration and \$50.00 needs to be mailed to Ray Johnson at 7246 Sportsman Dr., Brownwood, TX. 76801. You may also contact Ray via rayb.johnson49@yahoo.com or call 325-642-8853 to let him know if you are attending the school.



GOODNIGHT-LOVING TRAIL INC. & PECOS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION WILL BE HOSTING A LIVING HISTORY EVENT AT HORSE HEAD CROSSING CELEBRATION OF HISTORY NOVEMBER 5-6, 2021

A TWO DAY EVENT AT THE HISTORIC HORSE HEAD CROSSING ON THE PECOS RIVER CELEBRATING THE VARIOUS HISTORICAL FIGURES THAT CROSSED THE PECOS RIVER DURING THE 15TH CENTURY TO THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY. INDIANS, CONQUISTADORS, VAQUEROS, UNION SOLDIERS, CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS, BEFFALO ENIERS, GOLD RUSH, CATTLE DRIVES, WAGON TRAINS, CHECK WAGONS, STAGE COACHES, TRAVELERS TO THE SALT MINES, AND MUCH MORE.

THE GOODNIGHT-LOVING TRAIL INC. AND THE PECOS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION STRIVE TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH, EDUCATION, PRESERVATION OF THE RICH HISTORY OF THE PECOS RIVER AREA. THE EVENT INCLUDES CHECK WAGON MEALS, STORYTELLING, HISTORICAL PRESENTERS, HISTORICAL RE-ENACTORS, LIVE CANNON FIRE, SWAP MEET, VENDORS, AND LOTS OF CAMPFIRES TO VISIT. HORSE HEAD CROSSING IS A FORD OF THE PECOS RIVER AND IS ON FARM ROAD II TWELVE MILES NORTHWEST OF GIRVIN IN PECOS, COUNTY. THE GATES OPEN AT 4:00 PM FRIDAY FOR THE PUBLIC, AND SUNRISE SATURDAY. CHECK WAGONS WILL HAVE MEALS FREE TO ATTENDEES ON FRIDAY NIGHT AND SATURDAY. VENDORS WILL ALSO BE SERVING FOOD THROUGHOUT THE EVENT.

CONTACT delanec@gmail.com or bettydamron986@yahoo.com

Horsehead Crossing

The living history event at Horse Head Crossing will be taking place again this year! Ray Johnson, a friend of Fort Concho and a fellow living historian, will be helping make this program a success. For further information or to join in the adventure, please contact Ray Johnson (325) 642-8853 or email rayb.johnson49@yahoo.com.

For some history about the location and the importance of Horsehead crossing, you can visit: <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/horsehead-crossing>

A Fort With No Name

Written by Timothy Phillips

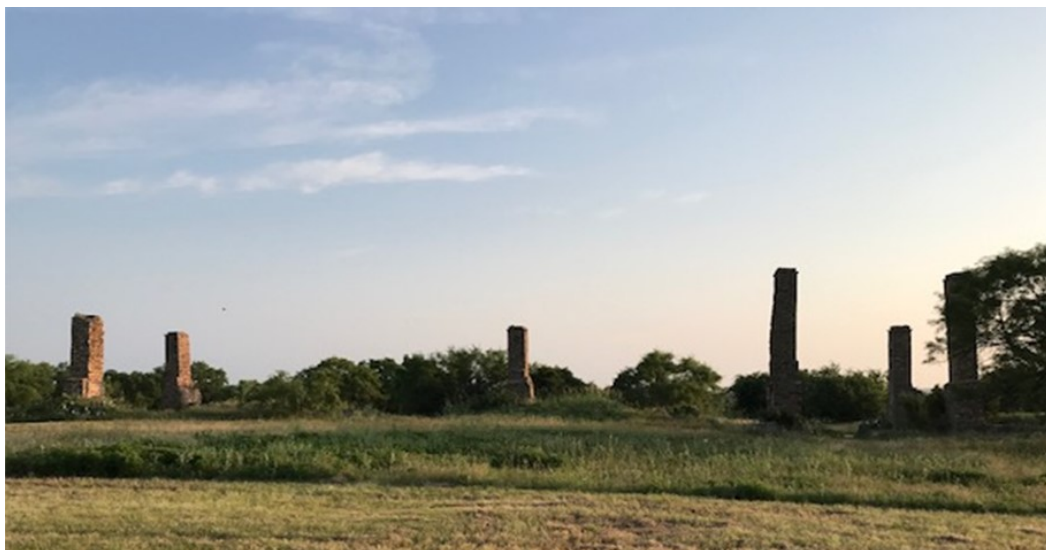
Timothy Phillips started participating in living history over 20 years ago. One of the biggest moments in his life was standing in Idaho, around Boise, looking out on the Oregon Trail, reading the names of those who took a brave step West. His passion for western history has been long lived and he has become a historical figure within the living history community himself. He reenacts as an 11th Infantry and plays the bugle for events and funerals of veterans. In his down time he also extensively researches the frontier Army to help remember the soldiers and to gain a full understanding of all the voices that were on the frontier who helped shape America into the world we know today.

Two rather amazing parts of the treaty of annexation of Texas allowed her to keep her public lands and give the federal government responsibility for quelling a multitude of very restless Indians migrating within the new state's borders. To solve the Indian problem, the U.S. Army eventually established three lines of forts to keep the Indians and expansionist white settlers apart.

Construction on the second line began in 1851. On June 12, 1851, General William Belknap, commanding the 7th Military Department from Fort Smith, Arkansas, received orders from Asst. Quartermaster General Henry Stanton to locate and establish forts to form this line. Company C of the 5th Infantry, plus explorer Captain Randolph Marcy and Delaware guide Black Beaver set out with the general to reconnoiter the territory. Upon reaching the Salt Fork of the Brazos, they located their first post, eventually named Fort Belknap. Marcy continued south to the Pecan Bayou where he found an area which abounded in water and timber for building.

To muddy the waters, as it were, an 8th Military Department (Texas) was created and General Persifor F. Smith was placed in command. By order of Secretary of War C. M. Conrad, Smith assumed responsibility for laying out the new line of forts. Unlike Gen. Belknap, Gen. Smith consulted a map for his fort-siting efforts and set out for Fort Belknap to consult with Gen. Belknap. At their meeting, Smith took charge of the second line by virtue of the creation of Department of Texas. He swept away all of Belknap's investigations, referred to his map, and stated that the second fort in the line would be built on or near a landmark on the Clear Fork of the Brazos called Phantom Hill. Since Gen. Belknap was already in the throes of dysentery, it

is doubtful he was able to hold forth long with Gen. Smith. After the meeting, General Smith returned to his San Antonio headquarters, while General Belknap boarded an army ambulance for the trip to Fort Washita, Indian Territory (Oklahoma,) and he did not make it. The general died about a half day short of Washita.



Orders were then issued to Lt. Col. J.J. Abercrombie to lead a building team to Phantom Hill. He led five companies of the 5th Infantry from Camp Belknap to the site on November 5, 1851. Also in the party was the redoubtable guide Black Beaver and a civilian employee, W.J. Maltby.

About dawn of the fourth day on the trail, the train was ordered into motion. Black Beaver, however, encouraged Abercrombie to stay put as a major storm was approaching. Abercrombie continued in his hack, certain the remainder of the party could follow his tracks and see where he left the Marcy trail. The remainder had hardly started when Black Beaver's storm fell on them with a cannonade of hail, sleet, rain, and rapidly falling temperatures. Some of the men missed the turn, but by day's end almost all had found Abercrombie's "Camp Necessity".

As so often happens in West Texas, the next day dawned clear.

Abandoned wagons and mules were rounded up and the party

proceeded to Phantom Hill two days later. On November 14 Abercrombie had Companies C and G at work on fort construction. B, E, and K arrived two days later.

The men made the same unhappy discovery that many subsequent travelers made: Captain Marcy's description of the area had been made during an unusually wet year. The Clear Fork of the Brazos, his "bold stream of sweet water" was mostly a near-stagnant brackish mudhole. An eighty foot walk-in well proved as unreliable as Elm Creek. Timber for building had to be hauled up to 40 miles, in spite of sufficient amounts of stone. In the end, fireplaces and foundations were made of stone while walls were picket. The powder magazine was all stone, while the guardhouse was stone with a wood roof.

Indian contact was mostly limited to the Penateka Comanche band of Po-cha-na-quar-hip, whose name the genteel Victorians translated as Buffalo Hump, but is more accurately rendered "Erection Won't Go Down." Apparently the only real Indian scare during the fort's active life came when "Buffalo Hump" moseyed past the fort with his entire band of more than a thousand souls. Breastworks were dug, and what weapons were in the inventory were issued, but the Comanches were content to merely ride past and scowl.

Poor food and bad water worked mightily to make the post a penitential experience. The thin, gravelly soil and lack of rain doomed any gardening attempts to failure. Fresh meat was also a lost cause, as the buffalo had interrupted their southern migration in the late 1830's. Preserved rations took the northeast route across the Red River through Preston with about nine months in transit, so considerable quantities were condemned upon receipt. The men did gather wild onions and plums, but these disappeared with the spring.

The 1853 report of Col. W.G. Freeman's inspection of the 8th Department found the men poorly clad in fatigue uniforms or some of Mexican War vintage. Weapons were limited to the 1842 Springfield musket, a .69 cal smooth bore, and some 55 men did not have even these.





The almost endless list of shortcomings with no positives eventually came to the attention of Gen. Persifor Smith, who issued orders about November of 1853 to close the post and relocate its companies.

Lt. Newton Givens marched the last men out of the fort on April 6, 1854. After they left, all the wooden structures burned to the ground. There remains considerable doubt about the cause of the fire, but the army placed the blame on a trooper named Scullion, the slave of Lt. Givens. Fort Phantom Hill is now a traveler's landmark and a bad memory.

But not for long. In 1858, business magnate John Butterfield was awarded a contract to carry mail and passengers twice a week between St. Louis and San Diego in 25 days or less. The controversial route ran southwest across Indian Territory, entering Texas at Colbert's Ferry and more or less following the military

route. What remained of Ft. Phantom Hill became Way Station 54, and was described by the first west bound passenger, the redoubtable newsman Waterman Lily Ormsby of the New York Herald. His book on the trip remains in print today. Despite \$600,000 annually from the U.S Post Office, the Overland Mail Company always sailed in stormy financial waters. The advent of the Civil War brought the venture to an end in 1861.

The ruins of the fort were again put into use by Frontier Battalions as they attempted to deal with Comanches, Kiowas, and their allies. In the post war period, Fort Phantom Hill saw use as a staging point for hunters entering the buffalo plains, and as an outpost of Fort Griffin. A town gathered itself briefly on the spot, for a short time serving as the seat of Jones County before Anson took the job permanently.



Bibliography:

Cashion, Ty. *A Texas Frontier : the Clear Fort Country and Fort Griffin, 1849-1887*. University of Oklahoma, 1997.

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Gwynne, S. C. *Empire of the Summer Moon : Quanah Parker and the rise and fall of the Comanches, the most powerful Indian tribe in American history*. New York Scribner, 2013.

Wright, Bill. *Fort Phantom Hill. The Mysterious Ruins on the Clear Fork of the Brazos River*. Buffalo Gap, TX: State House Press, 2013.

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 fort's history 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.)



Kim, Sarah, Chelsea, and Anamarie at Ft. McKavett



Above: 344th lowering the colors for Buffalo Soldier Day

Upcoming Events for 2021 at Fort Concho:

SEPTEMBER

- September 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 ~ Fort Concho Speakers Series
- September 18 ~ Museum Day
- September 25 ~ A Candlelight Tour: Seeing History from a Different Light

OCTOBER

- October 1-3 ~ Living History Artillery Training Course
- October 15 & 23 ~ Halloween Night Tours
- October 26 ~ National Mule Day
- October 28-30 ~ En Plein Air Art Show
- October 29 & 30 ~ Haunted House
- October 30 ~ Texas Forts Trail Wine Tasting

NOVEMBER

- November 5 & 6 ~ Murder Mystery at Fort Concho

DECEMBER

- December 3-5 ~ Christmas at Old Fort Concho



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

