

# FORT CONCHO

## NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

### Put on your Brogans!

As the mesquite trees begin to bloom and we plant our gardens for spring, I know many of us have been sewing, building, and prepping for another year of living history. Some have started new interpretations and many have been working to develop their craft. Regardless where you are in living history, I hope this season brings you joy as you explore new programs and continue long standing events.

Fort Concho's newest event "Evolution of a Lady" begins our era of including civilian interpreting for the nineteenth century. With so much still to come, we hope to see you all down the trail!



### Find yourself in San Angelo?

#### COME VISIT US!

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.



## Past Events!



## Campfire Story Night MARCH 13 & 19, 2025

This year's theme was Children at Fort Concho. Our first time hosting this program back in 2020 we had a similar theme. When the first program was held, two days later, spring break was extended by two weeks and then the entire world changed.

One of the stories told covers Birdie Cooper and her family jumping the quarantine lines to make it to Fort Concho during a time of yellow fever and cholera. Join Fort Concho next year during spring break for another round!



## Ladies Symposium and sewing!

**FEBRUARY 7-9**

It was time for the ladies to pull out their sewing machines for a week of creating wearable works of art. On March 12 and 13, the ladies gathered to construct the Lillie dress by Marna Jean Davis. Denise Roberts, Linda Morris, Shawndee Looney, and Sarah Thieme worked together to craft a Lillie for Sharon Baird, honoring her years of service to ladies' living history and her vital role in supporting historical programs.

On Friday, March 14, women from across Texas (and even a lady from Oklahoma) joined with their machines in hand. Sally Wolfe generously provided patterns and materials for ladies to make cloaks. As they sewed, they enjoyed tea and conversation, sharing insights and inspiration at the Ladies' Living History Symposium. From 8 AM until nearly 9 PM on Saturday, they diligently worked on their garments, forging both historical pieces and lasting connections. A special thank you to Sharon Baird for her continued dedication to creating a space where women, passionate about frontier interpretation can grow, learn, and support one another.

## Past Events!

# Evolution of A Fort Concho Lady



**MARCH 29, 2025**

Have you ever considered how much life changes in 22 years? The same applies for anytime and this was exemplified for our women's history month program. The ladies were in different spots on Officers' Row to discuss how the role of a lady at Fort Concho changed while our post was active. The community brought great questions and the ladies created activities to help develop their craft. Eunice Tibay and Marilda Johnson interpreted 1860s. Leah Speed and Daisy Herr interpreted 1870s. Sarah Thieme and Shawndee Looney interpreted 1880s.



# School of the Soldier

**FEBRUARY 7-9, 2025**

Soldiers will often tell you that they don't know much about their own history (unless their unit, regiment, or division has been featured in a famous war movie.) When we host School of the Soldier, our goal is to share the Army's history while also training interpreters. This year our interpreters were joined by nine active service members.

To make the program even better, we welcomed John Lee, Bryan, and JJ of Cracker and Biscuits. These men loaded up their original 1860s wagon, packed their supplies, and made the trek all the way from New Orleans to San Angelo. The food was defarbed, prepped, and served in the style of the Old Army, giving everyone a true taste of history.

An individual questioning our event amusingly mentioned how food "used to not taste as good." But when you consider that soldiers' diets consisted of whole foods and lard, it's hard to go wrong! The weekend concluded with three cheers and a resounding huzzah (something we heard countless times throughout the event!) We can't wait to host a similar program again next spring.



Photos from  
2025  
School of the  
Soldier



# How it All Began

BY ROBERT BLUTHARDT

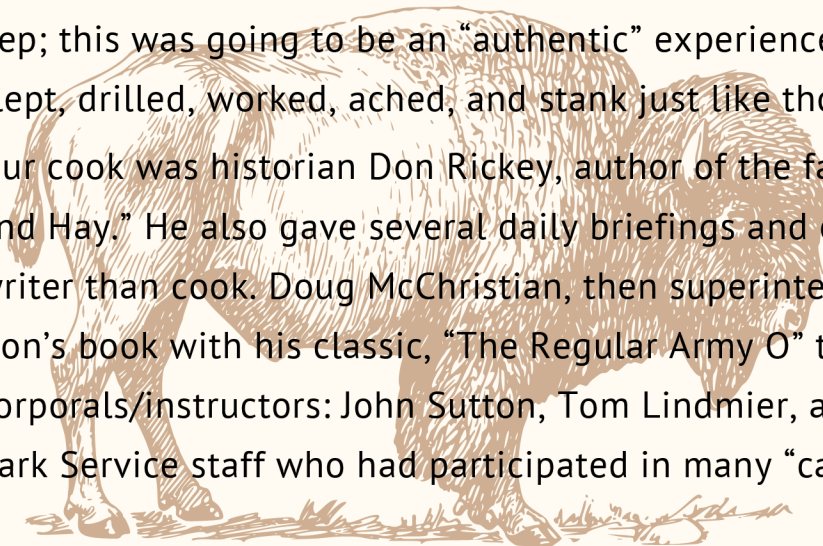
Starting in the late 1960s when Fort Concho had paid, professional staff, time-to-time efforts were made to have a living history program, but they usually lasted briefly or were tied to a special event, anniversary, or other project. Groups like the First Cavalry Horse Detachment from Fort Hood (now Cavazos), Texas, came to the fort in 1976 for the national Bicentennial celebration. Other groups with the rodeo, Hispanic riding clubs, and others appeared now and then. There were other celebratory programs as was done for the fort's centennial in 1967-68, but the first permanent program dates from April of 1982.

Then fort director John Vaughan sensed that the ever-improving site needed a program, so he sent six people to the National Park Service's Camp of Instruction at Fort Davis, Texas, to learn the history and techniques of accurate, uniformed living history to portray the army of the frontier. That doughty gang of six included three fort board members (Tom Gregg, Chase Holland, and Scott Holcomb) and three staff members (librarian Wayne Daniel, assistant curator Dennis Lumpee, and myself, as I had just arrived at Fort Concho to serve in the education position)

Tom Gregg's wife Fran served as our organizer with the acquisition of uniforms and equipment. We traveled to Fort Davis and upon our initial arrival and a short briefing, we changed into our 1870s uniforms, heard the bugle call, and stumbled onto the Parade Ground for inspection by First Sergeant Douglas McChristian, who proceeded to verbally shred someone who dared to appear without his issued kepi (military cap).

Yep; this was going to be an "authentic" experience and for the next five days we ate, slept, drilled, worked, ached, and stank just like those soldiers of a century ago.

Our cook was historian Don Rickey, author of the famed "Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay." He also gave several daily briefings and classes; we decided he was a better writer than cook. Doug McChristian, then superintendent at Fort Davis, improved on Don's book with his classic, "The Regular Army O" thirty-five years later. Our three corporals/instructors: John Sutton, Tom Lindmier, and T.J. Sperry, were veteran National Park Service staff who had participated in many "camps."



# How it All Began **BY ROBERT BLUTHARDT**

Our fellow soldiers were a mix of state and national parks staff, history buffs, and volunteers. We survived the experience with the usual adventures that seem more amusing 43 years later! I had never fired any weapon previously but scored the world's luckiest bullseye at the rifle range. The next night I called out the guard when I spotted an intruder that turned out to be a wandering horse---no one told me that some animals grazed in the area at night.

Back at Fort Concho our ambitious band of six started to recruit other volunteers, acquire more uniforms and equipment, and plan our future activities at fort events and other distant festivals. We had a very small camp at the first and most frigid at Old Fort Concho in December of 1982, but due a shortage of shoes, all of us could not be on duty at the same time.

Sadly, three of our original band are no longer with us: from the fort board, Scott Holcomb passed away about twenty years ago. From our staff Dennis Lumpee moved onto to other jobs and passed away and a few years ago Wayne Daniel died. Tom and Chase have "retired" from our army and I have been pleased to turn over the program to other staff many years ago, suiting up now and then for local parades and color guard details.

Maybe in a future article I'll recount some of our early adventures and the later expansions we had into other areas, but for now, I am pleased to have been there "at the start," and I am deeply grateful to those who have kept this going for so many years.



## Upcoming Events!



### Frontier Day APRIL 26, 2025

Join us on April 26th for our annual Frontier Day. Join us on Officers' Row for a day dedicated to celebrating our agricultural and ranching heritage. We will have a living history camp to discuss soldiers at Fort Concho and an Officers' Quarters filled with ladies baking, sewing and discussing the role of ladies at Fort Concho.

We will also be hosting the Lion's Pancake breakfast. Serving pancakes starts at 7:30AM to 11:00AM and tickets are \$10 with children 6 and under free.



### School of the Piece OCTOBER 3-5, 2025

Loyal Train of Artillery Chapter of the USFAA is returning this October!

For those traveling and planning to stay on site, we have a few cots available. If you own a cot, please bring it so everyone has a place to sleep. Showers are available on site! Please bring your own towel. Finally, for safety, please bring your wool tunic. If you need to borrow one, we will have extras on site.

Ray Johnson, head of the class, is excited to be presenting new materials and instruction at the school. The class will be focusing on teaching SAFETY. Everyone will come with their own interpretations but this class is to give you the tools to be a member on a piece with safety in mind.

Registration is \$60.

If you would like to register, or have additional questions, please contact Lt.

Col Ray Johnson at 325-642-8835

Follow Loyal Train on Facebook "Loyal Train of Artillery."



# FORT CONCHO

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK



- March** 14-16 Ladies Living History Symposium  
28-30 Evolution of the Fort Concho Lady
- April** 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 Fort Concho Speaker Series  
26 Frontier Day
- May** 3 Polo on the Concho  
17-Sept 1 Blue Star Museum  
17 Armed Forces Day  
26 Memorial Day
- June** 19-Aug 3 American Plains Art Show
- July** 4 Independence Day at Fort Concho  
26 National Cowboy Day  
28 Buffalo Soldier Anniversary Day
- August** 16 Fess Parker Day

- September** 3, 10, 17, 24 Fort Concho Speaker Series  
20 Archeology Fair  
27 The Officers' Ladies "What Shall We Wear?!"
- October** 3-5 School of the Piece  
10 & 11 Fort Concho After Dark  
17 & 18 Murder at Fort Concho  
24 & 25 Fort Concho House of Horrors  
~~24-25 En Plein Air Art Show~~  
26 National Mule Day

- December** 5-7 Christmas at Old Fort Concho

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Have you considered collaborating with Fort Concho?

Please reach out to Sarah Thieme @ [sarah.thieme@cosatx.us](mailto:sarah.thieme@cosatx.us) if you are interested. If you have been doing research and found a niche historical topic interesting, there is a chance someone else will too. Right up a 600 - 700 word essay with citations and you can be featured in this dispatch!

## Preserving our Western Heritage

Find us on facebook @ Fort Concho National Historic Landmark

[WWW.FORTCONCHO.COM](http://WWW.FORTCONCHO.COM)