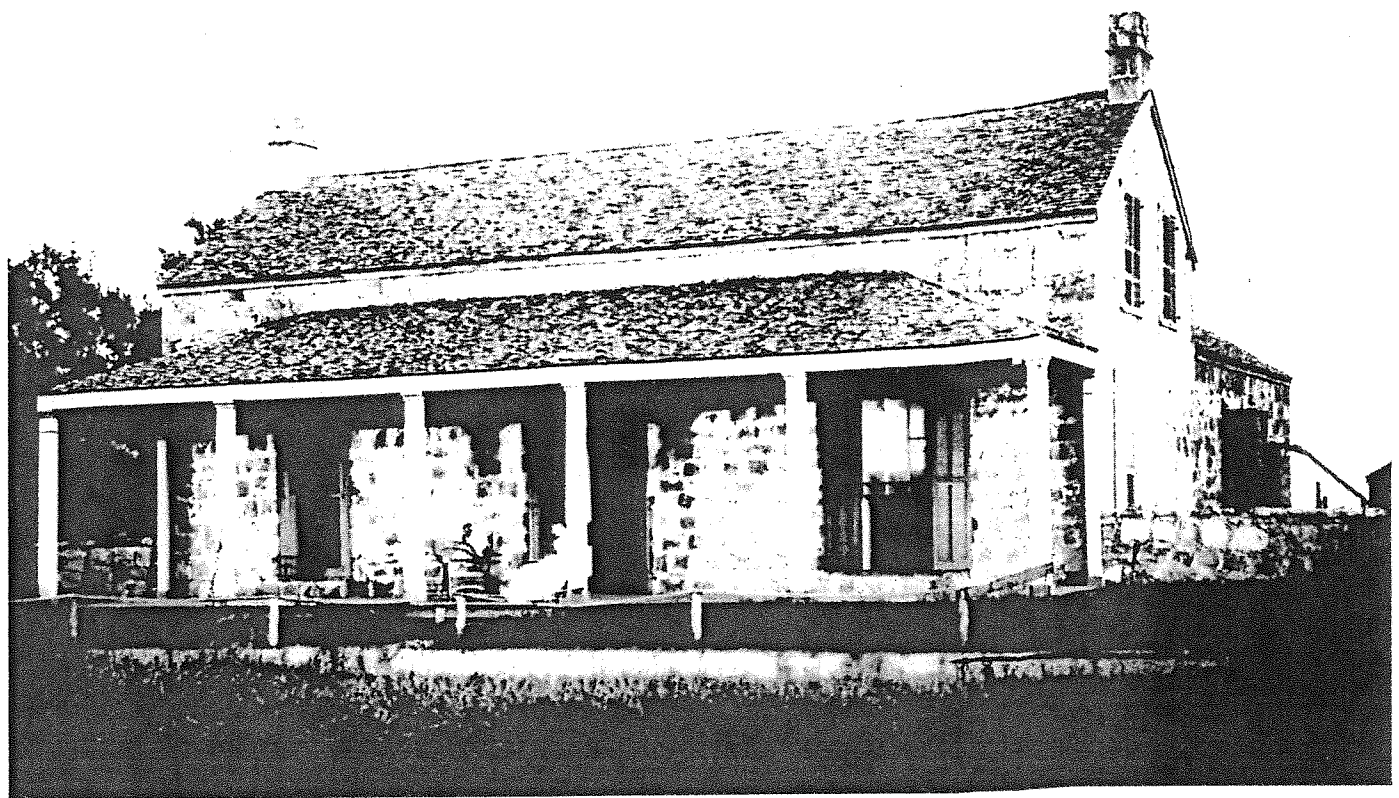


Readings on Fort Concho National Historic Landmark
San Angelo, Texas

RFQ Professional Services Historic Site Development

1. "Through the Centuries at Fort Concho," Ranch Magazine, November/2010
2. "Fort Concho, Past, Present, & Future," Ranch Magazine, November/2009
3. "Fort Concho Fights Economic Slowdown," CAMP Heliogram, June/2010
4. "What is Fort Concho," handout on site history/operations
5. "Through the Centuries at Fort Concho," Proceeding of 2012 Conference of
the Association of Living History Farms and Museums
6. "Questions and Answers About Fort Concho," handout
7. "Fort Concho is Not Just Any Abandoned Military Fort," CAMP Heliogram, 2011



A lady sits on the porch of Fort Concho's Officers' Quarters No. 8 near the end of the active fort period. Photo courtesy Fort Concho National Historic Landmark.

Through the Centuries at Fort Concho

By Robert Bluthardt

Director, Fort Concho National Historic Landmark

RANCH MAGAZINE

To the first-time visitor, Fort Concho presents a commanding appearance—a large Parade Ground with a center flagpole surrounded by several rows of 1800s buildings, all restored to their military exteriors. Little of the current century intrudes, as power poles, city streets and other modern distractions have mostly been removed or hidden. Perhaps, thinks the visitor, it was always this way, but many long-time residents know, “it was not always thus.”

Built and operated between 1867 and 1889, Fort Concho was never meant to be permanent. The U. S. Army built, relocated, and abandoned forts across the west as quickly as the frontier moved. Many forts crumbled into ruins; a few were stripped of their valued building materials; and some survived in very changed fashions.

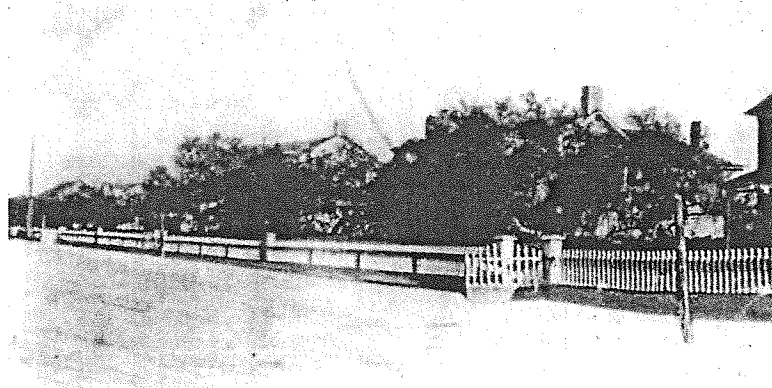
What saved Fort Concho was both an accident of its limestone construction and the development of a viable community across the river. These well built structures offered San Angelo citizens new homes and commercial locations at the close of the 19th century. By the early 1900s, the fort anchored what was

called the “Fort Concho Addition,” and the old post settled into nearly 40 years of semi-retirement.

Amazingly, local folks made some efforts as early as 1905 to save the place as a monument to the pioneer past, as former post trader J. L. Millsbaugh suggested that the city could buy the entire site for \$15,000. A dollar bought more in those days, and 15,000 of them was far beyond the newly incorporated city's budget. In 1913, the Santa Fe Railroad gave the eastern third of the parade ground to the city, and for a century that parcel has remained clear of any new buildings or distractions. Meanwhile, in 1923, the Daughters of the American Revolution

announced their plans to save the whole fort, but they fell far, far short in fundraising and settled for a stone marker that now sits near our visitor entrance at Barracks 1.

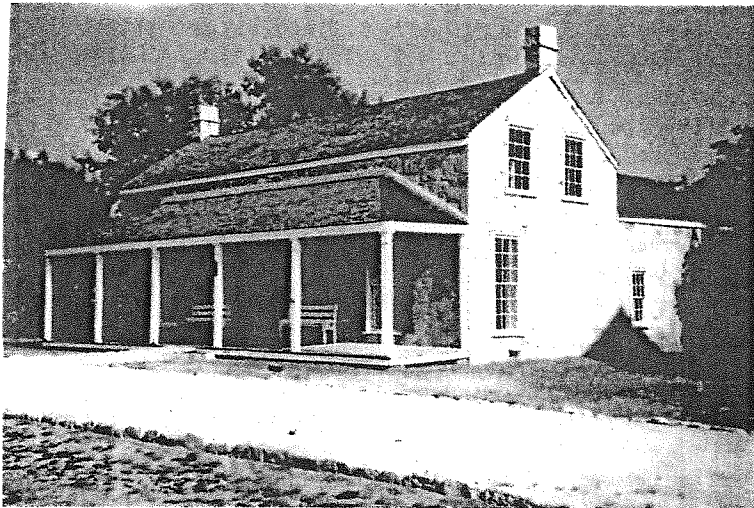
Ginevra Wood Carson, a lady of vision, energy, and endurance, took on the project in the late 1920s, creating the West Texas Museum in the old Tom Green County Courthouse in 1928, and moving the museum to the fort's Headquarters Building in 1930 at the dawn of the Great Depres-



Old Officers Quarters Fort, San Angelo, Texas.

Pub. by The Pioneer Drug Co.

The photo on this postcard by the Pioneer Drug Co., shows a view of Fort Concho's Officers' Row during the civilian period but still in the early days of San Angelo.



Current view of Officers' Quarters No. 8. Photo courtesy Fort Concho National Historic Landmark.

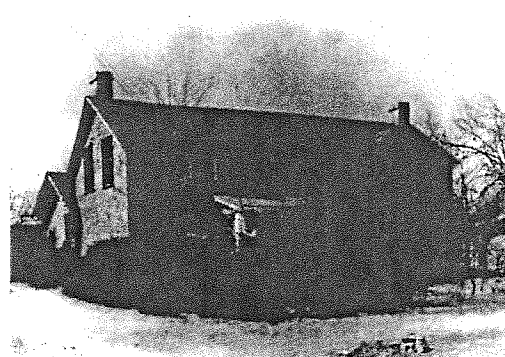
sion. Through that difficult decade, World War II, and the great drought of the 1950s, she directed the preservation efforts, never losing faith when resources were scarce. Mrs. Carson had to have a sense of humor—or at least great patience—as the city sometimes purchased old fort property, but then assigned it to some other municipal function. In 1939, for example, the city bought the old commissary building and Mrs. Carson's dream of new exhibit space were dashed when the large structure became the city transit bus barn.

After World War II, both the schoolhouse and two barracks and mess halls were returned to the museum and offered new spaces for displays, but the majority of the military post remained in private hands. In addition, a 1907 elementary school squatted in the

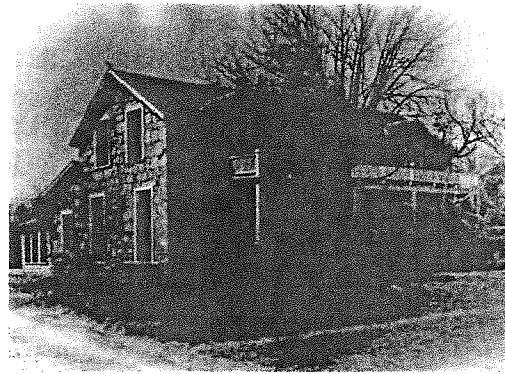
middle of the Parade Ground, several 1900s buildings fronted South Oakes Street, new streets cut through the site, and a series of residences filled the gap where Barracks 3 and 4 had tumbled into ruins a generation before. Many of the old officers' quarters had become private homes too, saved from destruction, but in some cases renovated far beyond their simple military styles.

Yes, Fort Concho survived, but you had to struggle to "see" the whole site.

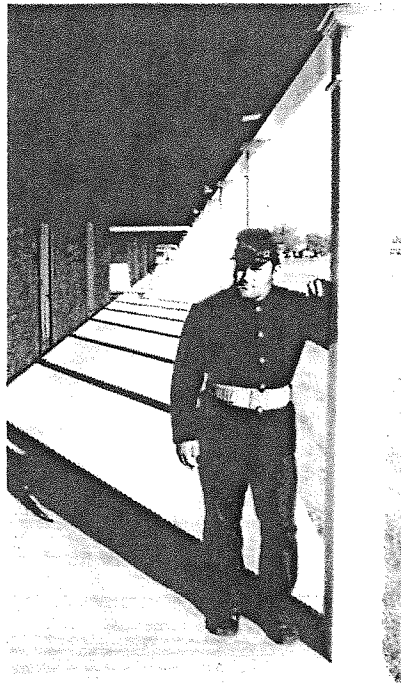
Mrs. Carson and her allies had accomplished much, but original visions of returning the whole fort to its 1800s glory seemed far away. Administratively, the fort preservation had some support, as it had been owned by the city of San Angelo since 1935 and made a full unit of city government by 1955, and it received the very prestigious



Above is Officers' Quarters 6 during the fort's civilian period. Below is a photo of Officer's Quarters 9 in the 1940s. Photos courtesy Fort Concho National Historic Landmark.



Cory Robinson, visitor and volunteer services coordinator at Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, stands on the porch of the restored enlisted men's barracks in period dress.



honor of being declared a national historic landmark in 1961.

Money, staff, and planning all came together in the 1960s. Mrs. Carson's successors raised the funds to purchase one officers' quarters after another, adding a piece of land here and another there throughout the decade. The fort hired a professionally trained staff in the late 1960s. Foundation and government money became available for land and building acquisitions, and the fort made substantial progress on holding events, creating new exhibits, a collections, and a research library. Visitation increased and supporters realized that the best days were ahead.

In the 1970s, major renovation projects included restoring Officers' Quarters 7 into offices and a research library. The San Angelo Junior League helped to create the fort's education

department in 1976. Major land purchases included the old quartermaster storehouse, the site of the old post hospital, the land between Barracks 2 and 5, and property facing the parade ground and Officers' Row. At the end of the decade, the Fort board and staff commissioned the Austin firm of Bell, Klein, and Hoffman to create a master plan for development and restoration.

The "Master Plan" as it was often called, spurred the restoration of the commissary into a meeting hall with a second

partnership with the Junior League which had assisted the fort in the professional restoration of Officers' Quarters 8 a decade earlier. The quartermaster storehouse became the first home of the newly created San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, and Officers' Quarters 9, after full restoration, became the site's education building.

Two major developments occurred in the 1980s: the fort board bought the old Monarch Tile block on South Oakes Street, getting back the original Barracks 1 and

2, and eventually worked with the city to see the non-historic property renovated into state office space. Also, the "Hospital-School Project" reconstructed the old post hospital in its 1870s form, created a new Fort Concho Elementary School nearby, and cleared the parade ground for the first time in almost a century. Now you could "see" the fort across the open field and the same impressive vista offered itself to passing drivers on South Oakes Street.

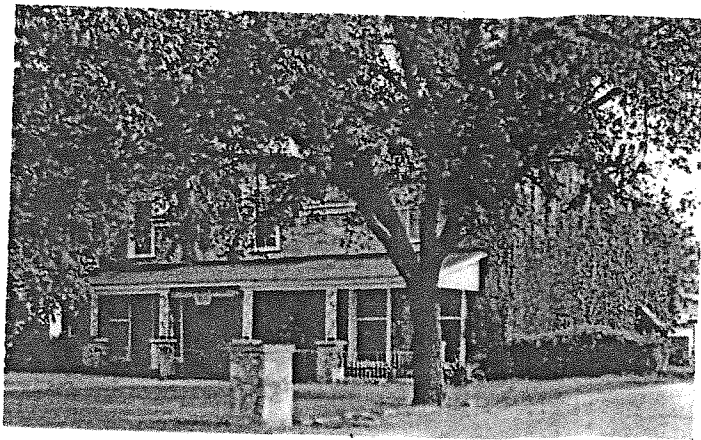
Over the past 20 years, improvements have continued with a new visitor center at Barracks 1, part of the overall creation of the Paseo de Santa Angela across South Oakes Street. Avenue C was closed in 1997 and replaced 10 years later with a period "company street," while a new pathway and traffic light offered a safe and attractive entrance for guests. The fort finally purchased the original stables block in 1997, transforming one non-historic section into

more revenue-producing office space, another two sections into storage space, and a last section becoming a huge rental hall for parties and gatherings.

But what is ahead? Mrs. Carson would be pleased with the progress since her first efforts over 80 years ago, but were she still with us (she passed away in 1958), she might recommend the following:

1. Remove Avenue D, create the company street, and bring back the entire fort grounds to those traffic-free days of the 1870s.
2. Rebuild the Post Surgeon's Quarters, a portion of which sits in the current Avenue D, so maybe #1 and #2 can be combined.
3. Rebuild the Guardhouse, located between Barracks 6 and the Quartermaster, identical in appearance to a barracks and slightly smaller.
4. Fill that gap between Barracks 2 and 5 by rebuilding both Barracks 3 and 4 and their mess halls. The fort's ever-expanding library, archives, and collections deserve new homes and better spaces to display our fine artifacts.
5. Rebuild Officers' Quarters 5, the only quarters along the row that did not survive.
6. Reconstruct the Post Bandstand, a handsome structure at the far west end of the Parade Ground. It would be an appropriate site for future concerts

Fort Concho will mark its 150th anniversary of establishment in 2017, so some of the above goals are not impossible. Established in the 19th century and restored in the 20th century, Fort Concho has already made great progress in the 21st century and looks forward to the ultimate goal of putting the fort back together as its first residents would have recognized it. The fort also thanks its many supporters, volunteers, board, and staff who have kept the faith, when the site "was not always thus!" ◇



Many of the buildings at Fort Concho were used as residences and businesses during the civilian period. Above, Officers' Quarters 2 as it appeared before restoration. Below is Officers' Quarters 8 as it looked in the 1960s. Photos courtesy Fort Concho National Historic Landmark.



Fort Concho—Past, Present, Future

Not Just a Frontier Fort

By Robert Bluthardt

Director, Fort Concho National
Historic Landmark



Cory Robinson, left, and Cindy Bishop stand in front of the row of restored officers' quarters

Historic Landmark in San Angelo, Texas. Photo by Gary Cullen.

To the many people who drive by daily on South Oakes Street just south of downtown San Angelo, Fort Concho has been here forever, and in a way, they are right. The two dozen limestone buildings that surround the currently lush Parade Ground date from the late 1860s and 1870s, and they represented the first permanent structures and settlement in the region. In the years that followed, "Santa Angela" established itself as a "whiskey and sin" village across the Concho River to separate the soldiers from their monthly pay. Over the next 22 years, the fort and the town grew and prospered together, and both underwent many changes when the U. S. Army marched away from Fort Concho

forever in June 1889.

The arrival of a railroad connection in 1888 and a second, direct rail line in 1909, helped San Angelo grow into an agricultural and ranching trade center. The old post had new occupants as civilians took up the homes that the soldiers abandoned.

The Santa Rita oil boom to the west in 1923 brought vast wealth to the city and soon the community had a new city hall, county courthouse, movie theater, hotels, office buildings, churches and a new neighborhood, appropriately named Santa Rita. Much of modern San Angelo stems from that 1923 oil strike. Meanwhile, historic preservation of Fort Concho starts in the 1920s,

with the dreams and vision of Mrs. Ginevra Wood Carson, an effort that continues today nearly 90 years later.

Today, Fort Concho is considered among the best preserved frontier forts west of the Mississippi, and the long effort to save and restore it is as old as those of nationally known sites like Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia and Greenfield Village near Detroit. The fort board and staff have been guided by a simple premise to physically restore the post to its 1870s appearance, but make it serve the widest possible audience within the broadest level of public service and education. That expanded mission within the heart of a major West Texas city justifies the motto, "Not Just a Frontier Fort."

Many might not realize that Fort Concho has been a western art, photography and sculpture center in recent years. Believing that history can be interpreted through artistic means, the fort has brought a wide range of special exhibits to the site. Mexican *retablo* art, Native American photography, sculptures of western cowboys and soldiers, and portraits of the "Cowgirls of the Rodeo" have all brought the American West to life with color and style.

Fort Concho has also interpreted the lives of the Mexican vaquero and the famed African American Buffalo Soldiers with sculptures and paintings. On a daily basis the fort has several Eddie Dixon western sculptures on display plus an impressive Clyde Heron painting of Ranald MacKenzie's attack at the Battle of Palo Duro Canyon. A 2011 photography display will cover the history of Women in Baseball.

Another lesser known part of the fort's resources is its impressive library and archives—a collection of books, photographs, microfilm, military records, vertical files, magazines and journals, and original records. These materials cover western, military and pioneer history, plus the heritage of San Angelo's earliest years. Included in the collection are the papers of architects, doctors, bankers and businessmen. Genealogists find family in the Bible collection, military records, census records and city directories. Authors, historians, archeologists and students all make use of the wonderful research resources residing at the fort.

Chocolate . . . how the West was Fun

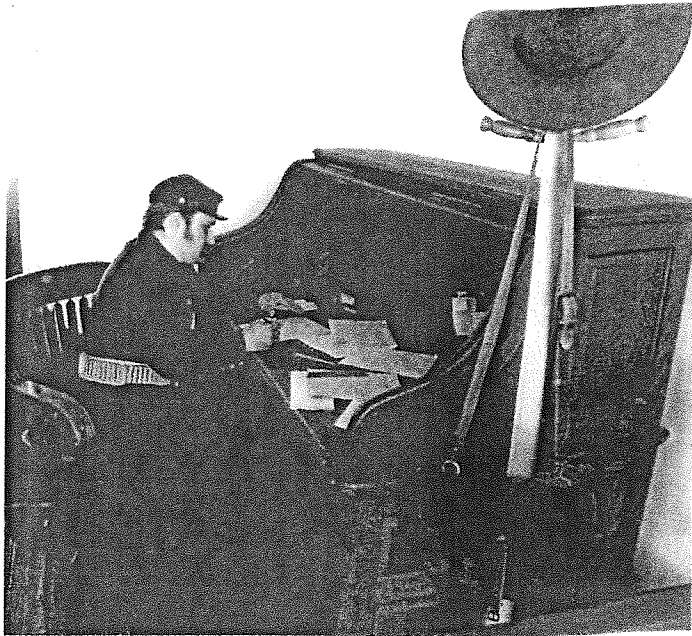
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Cory Robinson, visitor and volunteer services coordinator at Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, sits at a 19th Century desk in the Fort's original headquarters building, shown on the cover of this magazine. Photo by Gary Cutrer.

Behind the scenes sits the Fort Concho Collections, a warehouse of thousands of artifacts reflecting several centuries of human activity. Pioneer dresses, colorful quilts, weapons, farm and ranching tools, period furniture, toys, household items and military uniforms represent 80 years of collecting, a process that never ends.

In recent years fort staff members have created one or two special displays taken from these holdings, a tradition that will continue for years as there is so much to show. The fort welcomes future donations of items that fit the western/pioneer themes as well as the collecting time period of 850–1920.

Fort Concho is also lucky to have its own “Army,” a living history program that has grown to cover the heritage of the Infantry, Cavalry, Buffalo Soldiers, Artillery, and various ladies’ roles, including laundresses and officers’ wives. In addition to the human element, equines played a major role in the establishment of Fort Concho. The recent acquisition of a mule team, Mac and Joe, brings that aspect to life, and soon visitors will see the fort’s period wagons rumbling across the Parade Ground. Mac and Joe live in the fort’s Living History Stables, a modern facility dressed in period livery that serves the fort’s mules and volunteer cavalry unit.

Fort Concho’s “troops” maintain a very active schedule, covering 50 events and programs annually, with many out-of-town “campaigns” at other historic forts, community festivals, and heritage events.

Throughout the year, the fort offers a wide range of programs that go beyond the standard walking tour—and those are exceptional, too, with the guides dressed in period uniform or 1800s clothing. In March, guests can learn more about Victorian fashion and customs with the annual Frontier Ladies School, and in October, the guns will sound for the site’s yearly Artillery Training School. During the Wednesday lunch hours in April and September, a wide range of local heritage topics and current events are addressed in our Speakers Series. In the summer, children enjoy “Fun at the Fort” and try their hand at 1800s games and baseball, soldiering, Native American crafts, chuck wagon cooking, and quilting and sewing.

For over 30 years, Fort Concho has offered the Frontier School, a recreated 1880s school day, held in the Schoolhouse/Chapel. Area fourth grade students raise the flag with a soldier and may visit him in the barracks. They perform lessons with 1880s slate board; eat their lunches out of old lunch pails, and get their recess exercise with a game of “Annie’s Game,” a popular ball game of the day. Children, whose parents enjoyed the same program in its earlier days, now attend!

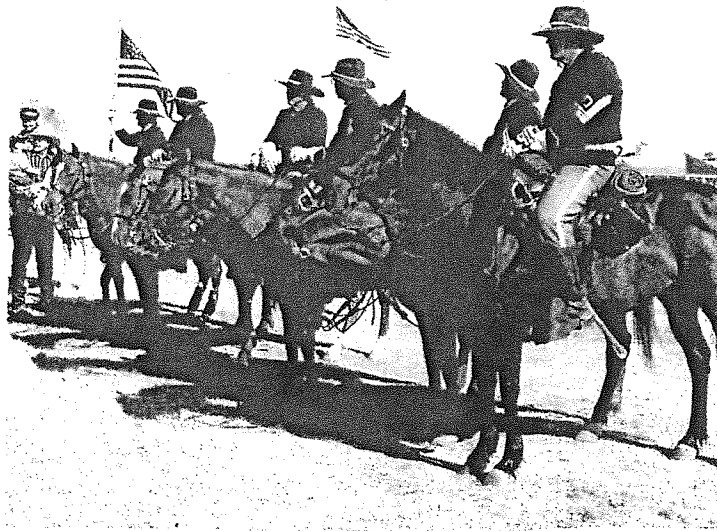
Holidays offer more opportunities for the fort to expand its reach with Buffalo Soldier Day in February, Armed Forces Day and Memorial Day

in May, and National Museum Day in September, when the staff produces a special display taken from the site’s collections. The annual Archaeology Fair in October makes all history fun and “hands on” with a make-believe dig, ancient craft making, pictograph painting and the shooting of a replica 1800s bow.

The site’s two largest special events, Frontier Day in June and Christmas at Old Fort Concho in December, each transform the site into active and festive place for children of all ages. Frontier Day celebrates our region’s agricultural and ranching heritage with sheep dog demonstrations and sheep shearing—two activities the average city child never sees up close, if at all. A mobile dairy classroom covers the many steps that bring milk to one’s glass. A rope making machine always has a long line of young people willing to try their hand.

All of the officers’ quarters have displays covering a wide range of heritage topics, native plants, 1800s games, with a full pioneer kitchen operating in the rear of Officers’ Quarters 6. The Fort Concho Enterprise, an 1800s baseball club patterned after a real team from that age, plays a full game on the Parade Ground according to the rules of their day. Mounted cavalry troops ride about the site and the artillery booms every now and then. The whole day starts early with a Lions Clubs pancake breakfast, and that represents the only activity that has a fee.

As big as Frontier Day appears, the annual Christmas at Old Fort Concho weekend tops it in scale and duration. Created in 1982 as a holiday fundraiser for the fort, the event now covers all 25 buildings and 40-plus acres for an extended three-day weekend. Operated by more than 1,000 volunteers, the event hosts over 15,000 guests, some coming from a dozen foreign countries, 15 states, and several hundred Texas cities and towns. A hundred merchants and artisans fill the various historic buildings while others display their wares in authentic tents on the Parade Ground, offering some unique shopping opportunities. On-going entertainment, children’s programs, special exhibits, acres of living history camps and drills, and a food court make this a full-day commitment.



Cavalry re-enactors pose for photos at Fort Concho's Frontier Day event held in June. Photo by Gary Cutrer.

The fort is also a unique place for a meeting or private party, as it makes available eight buildings ranging in capacity from 50 to 600, with different interiors reflecting 1800s Victorian elegance to the simple and massive space of an old stables. The Parade Ground also receives steady attention from area trail rides that end at the fort. Local youth teams play football and baseball on the big field and neighbors walk their dogs at night. The fort encourages such after-hours visitors as the ghosts don't seem to mind.

And what would an old fort be without a few ghosts? Edith Grierson, daughter of the post commander Benjamin Grierson, tragically passed away in the upstairs bedroom of Officers' Quarters 1 on September 9, 1878,



The Concho Cowboy Company re-enactors are flesh and blood actors who portray ghosts of sorts — the buffalo hunters, gunfighters, cowboys and ladies of the evening who inhabited West Texas in the 19th Century when Fort Concho was a working Army post. They will be on hand for Christmas at Old Fort Concho Dec. 4-6.

a victim of typhoid fever. Her ghost has been spotted by several guests. Lesser known but occasionally seen soldier ghosts have been reported in the barracks. It can get very peaceful on site at night and one's imagination does wander!

For the future, Fort Concho expects to continue with its popular slate of programs and events, while it seeks to rebuild a few missing barracks, create a new Visitor Center, and bring the site back to its 1870s appearance. In a way, the fort fulfills a mission similar to its military founders 135 years ago, providing a public service for traveling guests as well as its local citizens. Fort Concho has always been a part of San Angelo, and thanks to many citizens with vision, the fort will be here in 2017 when it celebrates its 150th birthday. ♦

Fort Concho Fights Economic Slowdown

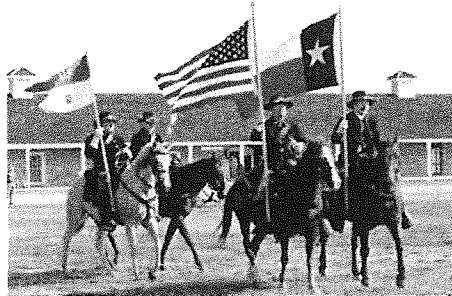
Like historic sites around the country, the Fort Concho National Historic Landmark has had its share of ups and downs. However, strong support from the community and some innovative revenue generation has helped keep the site thriving.

The fort has been owned by the City of San Angelo since 1935 and is a full city department. The city provides 43% of funding, while the remaining 57% is raised through donations, grants, and earned income. The latter source is where staff and supporters of the fort show their resourcefulness, getting income from special events, rental of facilities, admissions, gift shop sales, and other activities.

However, a \$1.5 million shortfall in sales tax revenues has caused the city to make budget cuts, including the cancellation of capital repair projects to replace the flagstone floor in Barracks 6 and repairs to the rear room and roof of Officers' Quarters 1. Several hundred thousand dollars worth of repairs and related projects have been postponed until additional funding can be obtained. However, there have been no layoffs of staff or cuts to operating hours.

The key, according to Fort Concho Director, Robert Bluthardt, is to operate with the objectives of physically restoring the post to its 1870's appearance, while making it serve the widest possible audience within the broadest level of public service and education. This approach justifies the motto, "Not Just a Frontier Fort."

The Fort Concho Foundation also plays a key role in raising funds and



The Fort Concho Cavalry recreates the days when the fort served as headquarters for the 4th and 10th Cavalry. (Photo courtesy of Fort Concho National Historic Landmark)

supporting the site. It has plans to reconstruct some of the buildings that have disappeared over the years, but funds have to be raised first.

Reportedly the best preserved frontier fort west of the Mississippi River, Fort Concho has 23 original and restored structures, many of which can be rented for overnight stays or special occasions. These include officers' quarters, the chapel/schoolhouse, commissary, barracks, quartermaster warehouse, and stables. Kitchen facilities, rest rooms, and air conditioning are available in some of the buildings.

However, key revenue producers are the special programs, which are held throughout the year. In March, guests can learn about Victorian fashion and customs with the annual Frontier Ladies School. In October, the annual Artillery Training School is held using the fort's cannon. A Wednesday lunch hour Speakers Series with discussion of heritage topics and current events are held in April and September. Fun at the Fort programs are held for children in the summer to

allow them to play 19th century games, including baseball, soldiering, crafts, chuck wagon cooking, quilting, and sewing. Other programs include Buffalo Soldier Day, Armed Forces and Memorial Day, National Museum Day, Frontier School, and an Archaeology Fair.

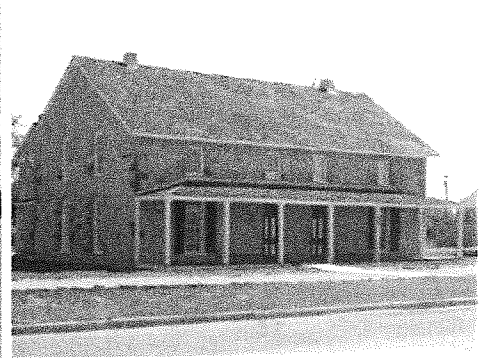
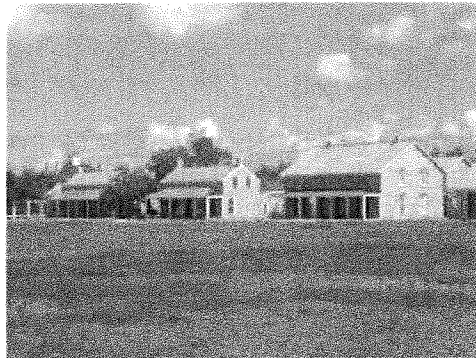
Two of the major programs are Frontier Days and Christmas at Old Fort Concho. The former is a celebration of life on the western frontier, with demonstrations and activities such as rope making and sheep shearing.

The latter is a three day event that opens the entire fort with activities that attract 15,000 guests every December. These include free entertainment, special exhibits, living history demonstrations, military drills, and children's activities. Over 100 merchants and artisans offer their wares in the fort's buildings or in tents on the parade ground.

The fort also has three museums to help attract visitors. The Fort Concho has exhibits in many of the historic buildings. The Robert Wood Johnson Museum of Frontier Medicine is located in the post hospital. The E. H. Danner Museum of Telephony is located in one of the officers' quarters.

This year will have a special event, the annual meeting of the United States Cavalry Association and its National Cavalry Competition, at Fort Concho from September 28 to October 3, 2010. Bluthardt notes that this could be the largest assembly of cavalry at the post since it was active in the 1880's.

Fort Concho was built in 1867 to provide security in West Texas.



Fort Concho is rated as one of the best preserved frontier forts west of the Mississippi River. The hospital (left) contains the Robert Wood Johnson Museum of Frontier Medicine, which has a collection of frontier medical instruments and displays. The fort's limestone buildings were built around a 500 foot by 1,000 foot parade ground (center). The officers' quarters (right) are used for displays and other activities during the annual Christmas at Old Fort Concho program and one is available for rent. (Photos courtesy of Flickr and Fort Concho National Historical Site)

WHAT IS FORT CONCHO?

- ★ It is a National Historic Landmark, one of only 2450 in the entire United States
- ★ One of the best-preserved frontier forts of the late 1800s west of the Mississippi
- ★ One of the oldest preservation efforts in America, dating back to 1928, the same time supporters began preserving Colonial Williamsburg and creating Greenfield Village near Detroit.
- ★ A twenty-four building/40-acre site with a ten acre Parade Ground, representing one of the larger open spaces south of the Downtown
- ★ A major San Angelo tourism attraction, serving over 60,000 guests annually from all fifty states, 300 Texas communities, and a dozen foreign nations
- ★ A recognized participant and supporter of the local arts community, the preservation and development of Downtown San Angelo, and the betterment of the tourism and the city's hospitality industry.
- ★ A major partner with various agencies, including the Texas Forts Trail, Downtown San Angelo, the San Angelo Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Texas Historical Commission, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Angelo State University, and Goodfellow Air Force Base
- ★ Meeting space for five San Angelo historical agencies
- ★ A seven-day/week operation staffed by fourteen, overseen by a fifteen member board, and assisted by 200 regular and 1000 special event volunteers
- ★ A creator of dozens of education programs and events, a Speakers Series, Frontier Day and Christmas at Old Fort Concho, and a half-dozen holiday celebrations
- ★ A home to a large Library/Archives and special research collections on frontier/military/pioneer history
- ★ A home to a Collections Division with thousands of artifacts that reflect San Angelo, Tom Green County, West Texas, and the American West
- ★ The home to a forty-volunteer/five unit living history program whose members portray Infantry, Cavalry, Buffalo Soldiers, Laundresses, and Artillery...along with a few mules!

Through the Centuries at Fort Concho

Robert Bluthardt

Fort Concho NHL, San Angelo, Texas

Fort Concho began as just one of many frontier military outposts created after the Civil War, when the Texas frontier, stagnated by that conflict, burst westward, creating two decades of conflict among competing groups: ranchers, settlers, buffalo hunters, and, of course, the native Comanche, Apache, and Kickapoo tribes. As was its thankless task, the United States Army assumed the unloved and unappreciated duty of securing the region. Following a strategy centuries old, it established its forts on the edge of the frontier line.

Begun in 1867 and not finished for another twelve years, Fort Concho became a larger and more permanent facility, thanks to the nearby limestone quarries. A row of sturdy officers' quarters, another of barracks, an impressive headquarters building, and other supply structures could accommodate up to eight companies or 350 soldiers and officers. Among the troops at Concho were the famed black troops of the western frontier, the Buffalo Soldiers, who comprised exactly half of its enlisted strength in the fort's 22 active years. Curiously too, the place reflected an exact balance of infantry and cavalry units over its history. Notable commanders included Wesley Merritt, Ranald MacKenzie, and Benjamin Grierson, but the fort was never attacked (the Indians do that in movies but not in the West) and by the mid-1880s, the town of San Angelo, created from the soldiers' whiskey and sin money, had diversified its economy. The arrival of the railroad in 1888 ensured the post's

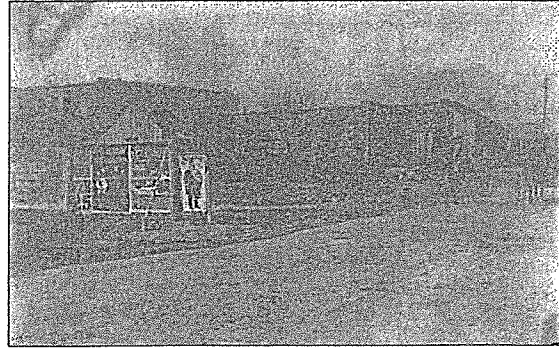


Fig. 2: Early San Angelo in late 1880s.

abandonment along with dozens of similar forts west of the Mississippi.

Unlike many towns joined to a fort, San Angelo thrived and prospered after military abandonment, and by 1900 the "old fort" as the locals called it had settled into its second phase with some buildings converted to housing and small businesses while others quietly fell into ruins. The Headquarters Building, one of the few of its kind in the Southwest, had escaped ruin in its new life as a rooming house—and it was that signature structure that Fort Concho Museum's founder, Gipevra Wood Carson, bought in 1930 to create the museum and preservation movement that continues today, nine decades later. Indeed, this project began in the late 1920s, a contemporary site with both Greenfield Village

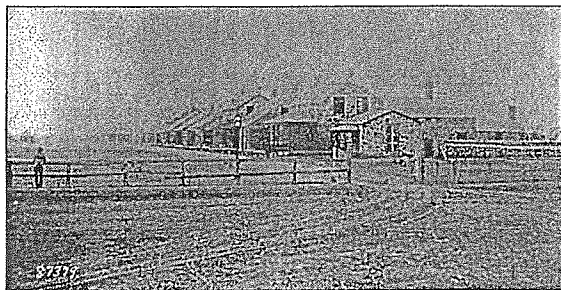


Fig. 1: Officers Row at Fort Concho, ca. 1884.



Fig. 3: Headquarters Building ca. 1930.

near Detroit and Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. Unfortunately, Mrs. Carson lacked the resources of the Fords and Rockefellers; a reading of the board minutes of those hard times of the 1930s notes a monthly income from a soda machine and donations that might cover a few acid-free boxes today.

But Mrs. Carson had big dreams and the Texas Centennial Celebration in 1936 convinced her that Fort Concho could become the "Alamo of the West." Her leadership followed an admirable long-term goal of eventually acquiring the entire core site and all extant buildings, turning them into a facility geared to education and public service.....indeed, not that far from our goals today. However, the Depression of the 1930s, World War II and the Great Drought of the 1950s stalled progress. By 1960, 30 years after the museum's creation, the fort could boast the Headquarters, Schoolhouse and two barracks and mess halls as saved, restored and open to the public, but over two-thirds of the site had been neither acquired nor restored.

The Fort Concho Museum of 1960 also had an eclectic feel: yes, we had the stuffed critters, questionable but iconic artifacts, a steam engine, and a 1910 architect's house on the site. The fort's annual budget crept up to \$9000 annually, but it lacked professional staff. In 1961 Fort Concho received the honor and designation of "National Historic Landmark," reflecting as much its future potential as the extant building stock. The next phase of the fort's life begins in 1967 with the hiring of a professional director and curator (a married couple, Steve and Carol Schmidt), a master plan done by the National Park Service, and a new commitment from the City, owners of the site since 1935, to support future development.

In a perfect and positive storm of area prosperity, federal and state grants, community partnerships, and a boost from the Texas Hemisphere event in San Antonio in 1968, fort progress heated up dramatically. The original Commissary, bought by the city in 1935 and converted into a city vehicle maintenance shop, returned to the fort, which joined with the Junior League to restore it as a functional meeting hall. One by one grants, and partnerships restored the many officers' quarters, whose original post-Fort Concho survival came from civilian occupancy, but such usage also posed severe aesthetic and structural challenges to bring a building back to

its original state. Aggressive removal of intrusive vegetation, power poles, and post-1900s homes and streets built a growing feeling that the fort was meeting its potential. A new Master Plan for Development adopted in 1980 and since refined several times made a break from the original, broader vision of Mrs. Carson. In a phrase, the new vision said, "let the fort be more like a fort." A similar rebirth of interest in the city's downtown, especially the oldest road, Concho Avenue, took place just a half-mile from Fort Concho.

A project of the late 1980s well captures the benefits of multi-level partnerships. Since 1908, the Fort Concho School, one of the district's four original ward schools, sat in the very center of the fort's Parade Ground. My predecessor, John Vaughan, tagged it as an aberration as quaint as "an Igloo inside the Alamo." Over many years he nurtured a partnership and fundraising effort among the local city government, school board, fort board, Meadows Foundation of Dallas, and dozens of private and other foundation donors. By 1988, the old school came down, opening up the Parade Ground viewshed. The old Post Hospital, lost to history since 1911, was reconstructed, accurate in every exterior detail, to be shared by the school and the fort for a library and medical history exhibits. And the new school campus was located at the far southeast corner of the fort, one of the only cases of an elementary school being on the grounds of a national historic landmark. The 300 children at Fort Concho Elementary School take full advantage of our programs and events—and the kids are especially helpful when we have a photo op that requires many young people.

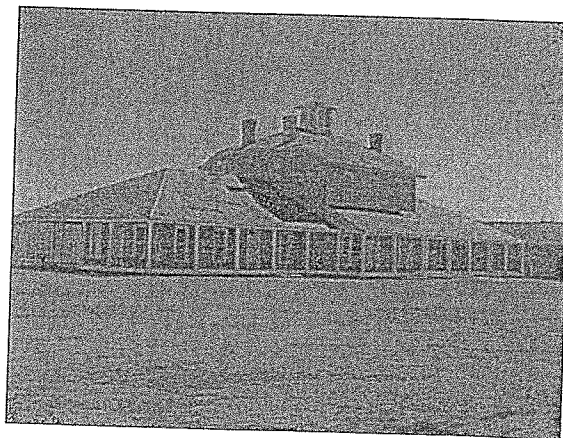


Fig. 4: Reconstructed Post Hospital, 1988.

Another community-fort game-changing event took place in 1992, with the RUDAT or Regional Urban Design Assessment Team project that brought a cadre of urban planners and architects to the city for a 96-hour assessment, published report and public hearing that further energized the city's Concho River, downtown, fort, and future created or restored facilities like the art museum, Depot, River Stage, and Visitor Center.

The fort's improvements on both buildings and grounds caused ongoing evaluation of site programs, events, education, and exhibits. It was not enough to bring the fort back to its 1870s appearance, we had to create an ongoing slate of activities that would make people want to visit the place. Over time we created a diverse series of programs: some for show, some for dough; some for public service and some to attract tourists; and some that might have pushed the envelope a little too far!

Fort Concho has always run tours and special events, dating back to its first years as a historic site, but with professional staff and a master plan or two by the late 1970s, the fort started some signature activities. The Frontier School, another partnership between the fort and Junior League in 1976, remains our flagship program, serving 1500 fourth graders annually. A ten-year partnership with the school district's gifted education program resulted in dozens of classes of applied history methods, archaeology, and study of material culture

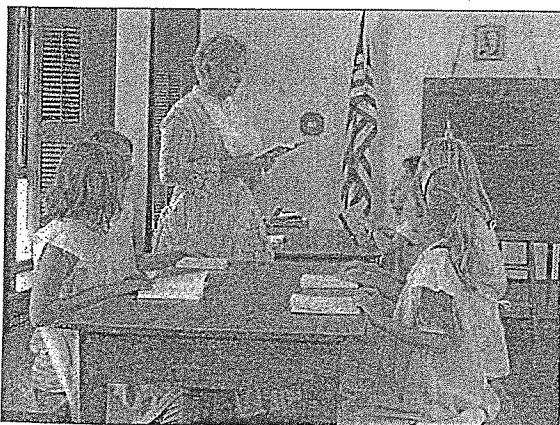


Fig. 5: Frontier School.

The most visible improvement in public programming celebrates its thirtieth birthday this year: the fort's living history program, beginning with a small squad of infantry. In 1984 with a

partnership with the Rotary Club of West San Angelo, we created a cavalry unit, followed by a Buffalo Soldier unit, then wagons and mules, artillery, and a laundress and officers' wives program. Recently, we have resurrected a period baseball program, and we now have a fledgling youth team. This past Frontier Day in April we debuted our Youth Military Heritage Squad, five boys and one girl in 1870s uniforms under arms.

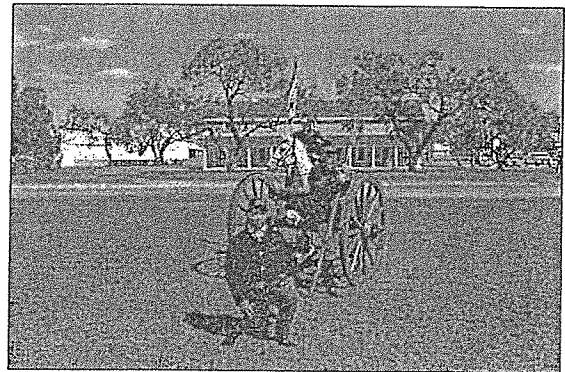


Fig. 6: Fort Concho Living History Program.

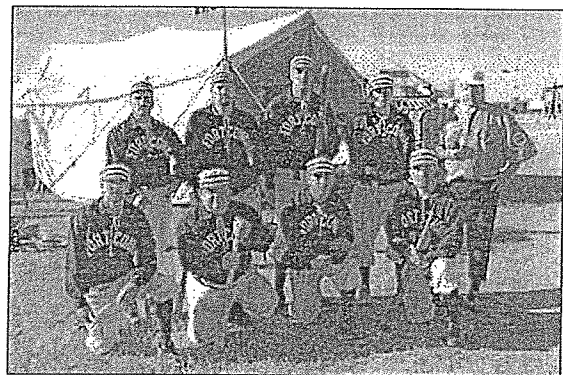


Fig. 7: Fort Concho Vintage Baseball Team, 2010.

The benefits of the "troops" have been immeasurable: while bringing some action and interpretation on site, we have used the programs and volunteers aggressively off site, providing us much positive public relations and time-to-time adventures. We find ourselves in amazing photo ops; and we have played history at Six Flags; our Buffalo Soldiers traveled to the Arch in St. Louis for 20 years for Black History Month, and annually we visit most of the historic forts in our territory. We have not neglected the local scene as our troops march and ride in most local parades, and we often take our "road show" to events for recruiting and publicity. It brings better result than most advertising. In keeping with "making

the fort more of a fort," we have restored several building interiors to a military theme, including a barracks, mess hall, plus an officers' quarters, hospital ward and chapel.

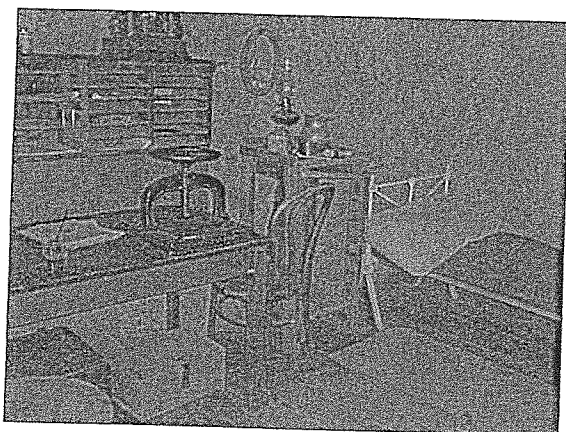


Fig. 8: Company Clerk's Room at Barracks 5.

With a nearby air force base, we often bring together the generations with interesting results, and our Armed Forces Day and Buffalo Soldier Day often feature several centuries at once. In 2003, we took a leap of faith and raised funds to build a new animal facility located just off the historic core site. The building with its classrooms, display areas, and stalls brought us the Clydesdales twice, as well as the 2010 annual National Cavalry Competition.

Several times a year we try to act like a real museum with traditional exhibits, and some have been classy enough to merit a major opening. Our belief in teaching history through art, sculpture and photography—even the performing arts of concerts and plays—has resulted in displays of western art, Native American photography, documents and dresses, and, of course, topics like cavalry heritage and our city's history. By the way, our major exhibits have been housed in the fort's Quartermaster Building, our oldest building that was restored and converted into the first location for the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts in 1985. When the art museum outgrew it and relocated to a new building just up the street, we took it back and continue to use it for both displays and public events.

And speaking of public events, I have been guilty of letting no anniversary or public holiday go unmarked. In a typical year we will host or create events for Memorial Day, Fourth of July, National Cowboy Day, and National Museum Day, to name a few. We partnered with groups

to create an archaeology fair in the fall and the Texas Mesquite Arts Festival in the spring. For several years we hosted the Sheep Run Festival. We are still looking for several of those 2004 sheep! Our April Frontier Day is hardly original, but it combines a breakfast by the Lions Clubs with a morning of history, kids events, sheep shearing, and demonstrations. Every year that we see more ways kids are removed from reality is another reason to keep this one going! Our granddaddy of them all, Christmas at Old Fort Concho, marks its thirty-first version this December with hundreds of volunteers, bringing a solid combo of food, entertainment, history, and shopping. It is fun; but it also helps pay the bills.

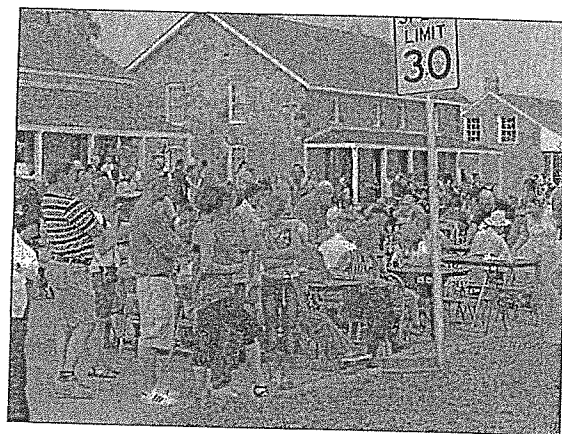


Fig. 9: Frontier Day at Fort Concho.

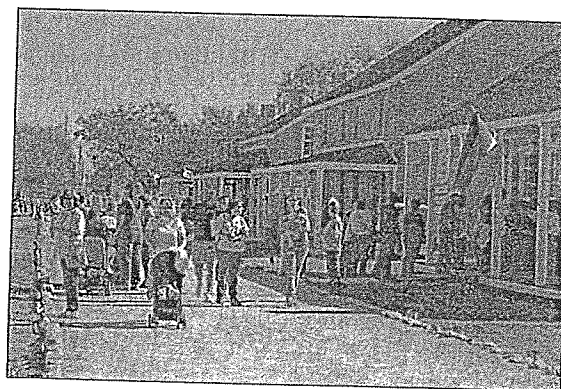


Fig. 10: Christmas at Old Fort Concho.

And speaking of bills, one may ask how do we pay for all this? The fort's annual operating budget is about \$825,000; but it gets stretched thin to cover the 40 acres, 24 buildings, and the staff and expenses to create and manage everything we have seen today. About 35 percent of

the operating funds come from the General Revenue Fund of the city of San Angelo, thus about two-thirds of the place operates as what the city calls an "enterprise fund." Given that we receive ten percent less from the city than we did 15 years ago, we must be very enterprising indeed!

We have admission charges and a gift shop; the Christmas event usually clears about \$45,000 and the membership programs bring in the same. Throughout the year we rent up to seven site buildings, and we have non-historic property we lease for state office space just to the north of the site. In another Great Leap of Faith in 1980, the fort board took out loans to buy a block on the fort's north side because it contained two of the fort's original barracks, since incorporated into a warehouse/light manufacturing space. Today, the barracks have been separated and restored and the non-historic space has been fully rehabbed into office space that both improved the fort's northern flank and provides 30 percent of the site's operating income.

What have we learned and what have I learned in all this?

1. You can't have enough friends and partnerships. I could spend another session on our many partners, both local and regional.
2. Preservation and museums must have a sustainable plan and focus.
3. Government and the public are changing attitudes on what they are willing to fund and at what level. This brings us back to Number 1—partnerships.
4. You have to stay active, relevant, and engaged. You do not have to sell your soul completely, but the days of the pristine museum and purity are over.
5. It is about the money—no revenue, no programs—no program, no visitor experience, no visitor experience, no visitors—and then no revenue!

But money aside, it is about people, people with the passion and vision willing to work with you—even disagree with you—about where to take the organization. It is also about long-term. It took the Army 12 years to build the fort; we have been working at restoring it for almost 85 years, and we are not finished yet.

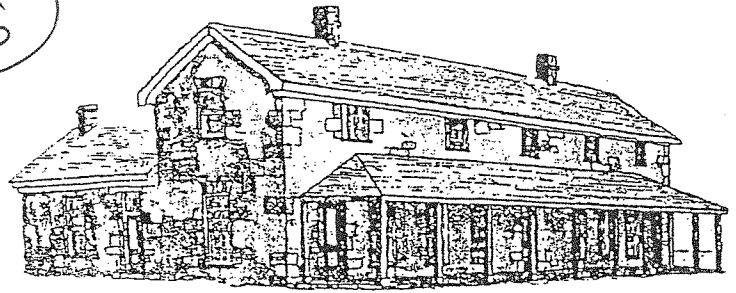
And over time, those partnerships have taken this site from a very disjointed affair of distressed buildings to a completely restored site

that serves thousands annually. We trust that the soldiers would be surprised at what the fort became, and we hope that Mrs. Carson would be pleased with what has been accomplished.

FORT CONCHO

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

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



HEADQUARTERS

RESTORATION, PRESERVATION AND MUSEUM

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT FORT CONCHO

1. When was Fort Concho founded? The fort was established by troops of the 4th US Cavalry on December 4, 1867.
2. Why was it put here? After the Civil War the increase in westward traffic through Indian lands caused conflicts with area tribes. The army was instructed to establish many forts along the frontier in West Texas. The specific location for Fort Concho is quite strategic with the junction of the three Concho Rivers. Also, several mail/stage routes passed through the immediate area.
3. How long did it take to build this post? The first buildings (Quartermaster & Commissary) were erected over the winter of 1867-68. Building took place for the next ten years with the last structure (chapel) completed in 1879. Constantly changing post commanders, difficulty in obtaining building materials, and a general lack of construction skill among the troops all contributed to the difficulty.
4. How many troops were stationed here? The post could accommodate eight companies of troops, about 350-400 enlisted men and 35-50 officers. The total numerical strength of Fort Concho could change on a daily basis as troops were coming and going. Average daily strength would be several hundred.
5. What did the troops do here? Much of the daily routine was taken up with maintaining the post. Wood and water supply, construction/repairing buildings, hay and food supply, care/cleaning of equipment, mounted and dismounted drill, and daily guard and ceremonial duties took up much of the soldiers' time. Troops were sent from the post from time-to-time for scouts and campaigns against native tribes and civilians who stole or destroyed government property. In general the troops were a mobile police force on the frontier, but military authorities were careful not to intrude where civil authorities were in control.
6. Was this just a cavalry post? No. Fort Concho had both infantry and cavalry throughout its twenty-two year existence. While the fort had artillery pieces on the site, it did not have artillery soldiers stationed here beyond the occasional visit of an officer or two passing through.
7. Were there both black and white troops here? Yes. At any given time Fort Concho had a mix of black and white troops. The 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments were all black units with white officers. Elements of those regiments were stationed at Fort Concho at one time or another in the 1870s and 1880s. The fort also had cavalry units from the 3rd, 4th, and 8th Regiments and infantry troops from the 10th, 11th, 14th, 16th, and 19th Regiments.
8. Were there civilians and women here? Yes. Women and children (usually the wives and children of the officers and some enlisted men) lived on or near the post. Civilian employees included teamsters, construction personnel and medical personnel in the hospital. Laundresses, women who served in the various companies to clean soldiers' clothes and do some cooking, received daily rations of food and fuel. Any frontier army post had a mixture of soldiers and civilians.

9. Where is the wall? There was never a protective wall at this post. Most western frontier posts did not need such a wall as few Indians would attack a post. Fort Concho did have a small stone wall surrounding the post that helped keep wandering buffalo off the parade field.

10. How big was Fort Concho? The government reservation totaled 1640 acres. Today, that would reach to the Concho Rivers on the north, east, and south, with the west boundary being the Bryant thruway. The historic site in 1999 comprises about 40 acres.

11. Why did the army leave Fort Concho? By the late 1880s the growing local population, the arrival of the railroad, and fewer Indian tribes in conflict with the settlers convinced the army to consolidate its posts into fewer but larger facilities. Thus, Texas saw most of its posts shut down in the 1880s with the exceptions of Fort Sam Houston (San Antonio) and Fort Bliss (El Paso), which still operate today.

12. When did the troops leave Fort Concho? For several years the army had been reducing the troop levels at this post. The last unit, Company K of the 19th Infantry, marched away on June 21, 1889.

13. What happened to the fort? All surplus supplies were either sold to the local civilians (San Angelo by 1889 had 2500 people) or were shipped to other posts. As the army had leased the land, the property and its buildings reverted to the civilian owners. Within twenty years the fort had become a residential area with some of the larger buildings used for commercial purposes.

14. When did the preservation effort start? As early as 1905 it was suggested that the fort be saved as a memorial to West Texas earliest pioneers. In 1928, the West Texas Museum was founded in San Angelo and moved to Fort Concho's Headquarters building in 1930. Over the past seventy years property has been purchased, buildings restored and exhibits and programs produced.

15. Who runs the museum and site today? The Fort Concho Museum is operated by the City of San Angelo, Texas. The city provides 50% of the funding for museum operations; the fort board, staff, and volunteers--like you--help raise the other 50% of the annual budget. The museum has a staff of fourteen (13 full time and 1 part time) and hundred of volunteers who assist with education programs, special events and ongoing activities.

16. How many buildings are original today? Most of the structures are original. The rebuilt structures include Barracks 5 & 6; Mess Halls 5 & 6, and the hospital. The rest are original! The fort is considered the best preserved site of its kind in the nation.

17. How can someone get involved with the fort? A membership in the Fort Concho Museum Association will provide newsletters plus many special mailings and invitations, discounts on programs, and rental opportunities of an officers' quarters. Volunteers are always welcome to assist with the ongoing programs. Persons can call 481-2646 on weekdays and have volunteer information sent to them.

Fort Concho Is Not Just Any Abandoned Military Post

This is another in a series on the forts that have influenced CAMP and its role in historic preservation. Herb Hart

One of the most effective forts of the old west, and what today is one of the best preserved, is Fort Concho at San Angelo, Texas near the Concho River after which it was named. It was established in 1867, replacing the earlier Fort Chadbourne which had been abandoned due to a lack of adequate water sources.

Building Fort Concho was started by a detachment of 59 enlisted men and an officer from Fort Chadbourne. It had become recognized as a strategic location with the Butterfield, Goodnight, Comanche, Chihuahua and California trails all passing in the vicinity. It also had a good water supply and plenty of forage.

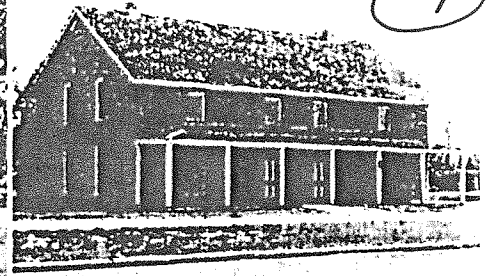
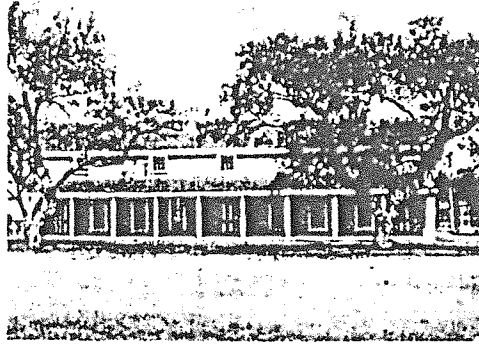
Confusion marked the early days. The first problem was settling on an exact site. More than \$28,000 was spent in preparing an area before it was rejected in favor of the final choice. Then despite a total of 16 officers, 372 enlisted men, and 137 civilian builders in December 1867, progress was slow. The biggest delay was in getting supplies from San Antonio.

The buildings were to be constructed of pecan woods, but this proved too hard for normal use. Only a building of poles was to be completed in the first month, and this was for the post sutler. Everyone else lived and worked under canvas.

Finally it was decided to tap into the nearby limestone quarry. With the decision to build the fort of this, work went ahead in earnest, four years after Fort Concho had been founded.

By 1875, when the fort was almost in its final state and while its Indian activities were at high level, General Sheridan suggested, "The usefulness of Fort Concho as a post will cease before long ... and I must decline to spend any more money upon that post." With this he rejected a proposal for several new buildings, and a requisition for certain materials. He was especially disenchanted by the justifications set forth in the requisition. He did not consider specific enough explanations of "putty for puttying, paint for painting."

Construction problems not withstanding, Fort Concho's garrison had a busy time. Although no organized



The post headquarters at Fort Concho (left) and the officer's quarters (right) are built of sandstone, which has contributed to their preservation. The post was completed in 1875, but was abandoned by 1889. Most of the 40 buildings on the 40-acre site have been preserved or reconstructed. A great deal of credit for its preservation goes to the citizens of San Angelo. (Photos from Flickr)

campaigns were undertaken in the first four years from Concho, in 1869 the troopers met Indians in two fights on the Salt Fork of the Brazos River. The first ended in a tie, but the second was a decided victory for the Army. Its major effect was to cheer up the Texas citizens who were undergoing the pangs of Reconstruction and the Indian depredations that seemed to go hand-in-hand with it.

Several actions with the Comanches took place through the years with post commander Colonel Ranald Mackenzie taking his 4th Cavalry to several forts until 1873 when he made his famous raid into Mexico. This earned his troopers the title of "Mackenzie's Raiders," a nickname that was revived in a television series in the 1960's.

By 1880 combat action from Fort Concho had decreased and in 1889 it was abandoned and the Army marched away.

Its solid limestone construction contributed to its permanence and 40 buildings on its 40 acres still standing today

The property became privately owned by the 20th century. Interest in its preservation resulted in donations of part of the fort to the city of San Angelo and it was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1961.

According to Wikipedia, "The landmark today includes most of the original fort and twenty-three main structures, mostly original or restored, but some reconstructions. These structures include a Headquarters, Officers' Quarters, Soldiers' Barracks, and the Post Hospital. There are regular and changing exhibits in the fields of military history, the heritage of

San Angelo and West Texas in general, and the daily life of a soldier and an officer."

In 1962 when Herb Hart started the research and travels for his four-volume *Forts of the Old West* series, a Marine Corps friend Major William Barrett urged him to include Fort Concho in his coverage. A year later Hart did this when he visited it during his second trip to the west, and it was included in his book, *Old Forts of the Southwest*.

The Fort was under the care of the city of San Angelo and after several years of city-managed maintenance, the first professional director Stephen Schmitt and his wife Carol were hired in 1967. They continued to improve the site for more than a decade, when Stephen then took a leave of absence in 1978 and Carol remained at the fort. The successor as director, John Vaughn, took over in 1979. He served until retiring for health reasons in 1998.

Robert F. Bluthardt succeeded Vaughn and continues to carry out an enthusiastic program as a department of the city. Bluthardt had been the director of education at the fort since 1982.

Hart returned to the fort at least a half-dozen times, including the U.S. Cavalry Association bivouac in 2000. Both Hart and the Cavalry Association will be back there for the September 28-October 2 encampment and Cavalry competition.

They can expect to find a virtually intact Western post that continues to prosper as a regional and city attraction supported primarily through city appropriations, an active year-round program, an enthusiastic staff and many volunteers.

CAMP Hellogram 2011