

FORT CONCHO HISTORICAL TRAIL

TEXAS SOUTHWEST COUNCIL

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Welcome to the Fort Concho Historical Trail. The original trail was developed by Frank T. Hilton in 1981. He was the Concho Valley Council, BSA, Program Director. The Trail was updated in 2023.

Anyone may hike the trail and purchase a patch.

TRAIL REQUIREMENTS

The trail is divided into three parts.

1. Fort Concho
2. Downtown San Angelo-Historic Concho Avenue
3. Train depot and freight building; Old Town; San Angelo Fine Arts Museum; Celebration Bridge.

Participants may choose to walk the entire trail which will take two + hours. Make sure everyone has drinking water and good shoes for walking.

1. Scouts taking the trail are reminded that they are representatives of their organization. Their personal appearance should always be neat; they should wear their uniforms correctly, with proper insignia. They should be extremely courteous, and render service where needed.
2. We recommend that Scouts travel the trail by group. Each Scout group must have at least two competent adult leaders (over age twenty-one). BSA requires supervising adults to have completed Youth Protection Training. Girl Scout troops should follow their organization's requirements.
3. The Trail begins at Fort Concho. Please go to the Visitor's Center to check in and receive additional maps and information about the fort. There is a gift shop and photographs of the fort from the early years. The only restrooms at the fort are located in the Visitor's Center. Self-guided tour tickets are \$3.00 for adults, \$2.00 for seniors and military, and \$1.50 for students age 7-17. Six and under free. Guided tours are not available at this time.
4. Upon completion of all 3 parts of the Historic Trail, you may purchase your Fort Concho Historical Trail Patch at the Boy Scout Office, 104 Veterans Memorial Drive, San Angelo, TX. See the location on the map. The building is located by the low water crossing on Irving St and Veterans Memorial Drive. Operating hours are Monday through Friday 9 am to 5 pm. Patches cost \$4.00 each. Call 325-655-7107 for additional information.

Note: There are many shops on Concho Avenue. The owners will greatly appreciate you visiting but please keep an eye on young children. There are clothing stores, antique shops, restaurants, kitchen wares, gifts, book store, jewelry, chocolate, ice cream (37A Concho), home décor, etc. It is a fun place to shop!

Consider these additional historic locations of San Angelo.

You will find in the back of this booklet the locations of painted murals. A statement from their website: "Historic Murals of San Angelo, Inc. is an exclusively charitable and educational organization. We work to promote community pride, combat community deterioration and preserve and rehabilitate buildings of historic and architectural significance." You will not need to walk to these murals. Drive to the murals, call the number listed, and follow directions to listen to the information. The murals offer glimpses of San Angelo history.

<https://www.historicmuralsofsanangelo.org/murals.html>

Notice the painted sheep in town. There are currently 97 fiberglass sheep that have creative designs. San Angelo was known as the "Wool Capital of the World" because at one time more wool was shipped from this location than any other inland shipping area. San Angelo even hosted the Miss Wool of America contest for 20 years. This show was nationally televised for several years. The pageants can still be viewed at

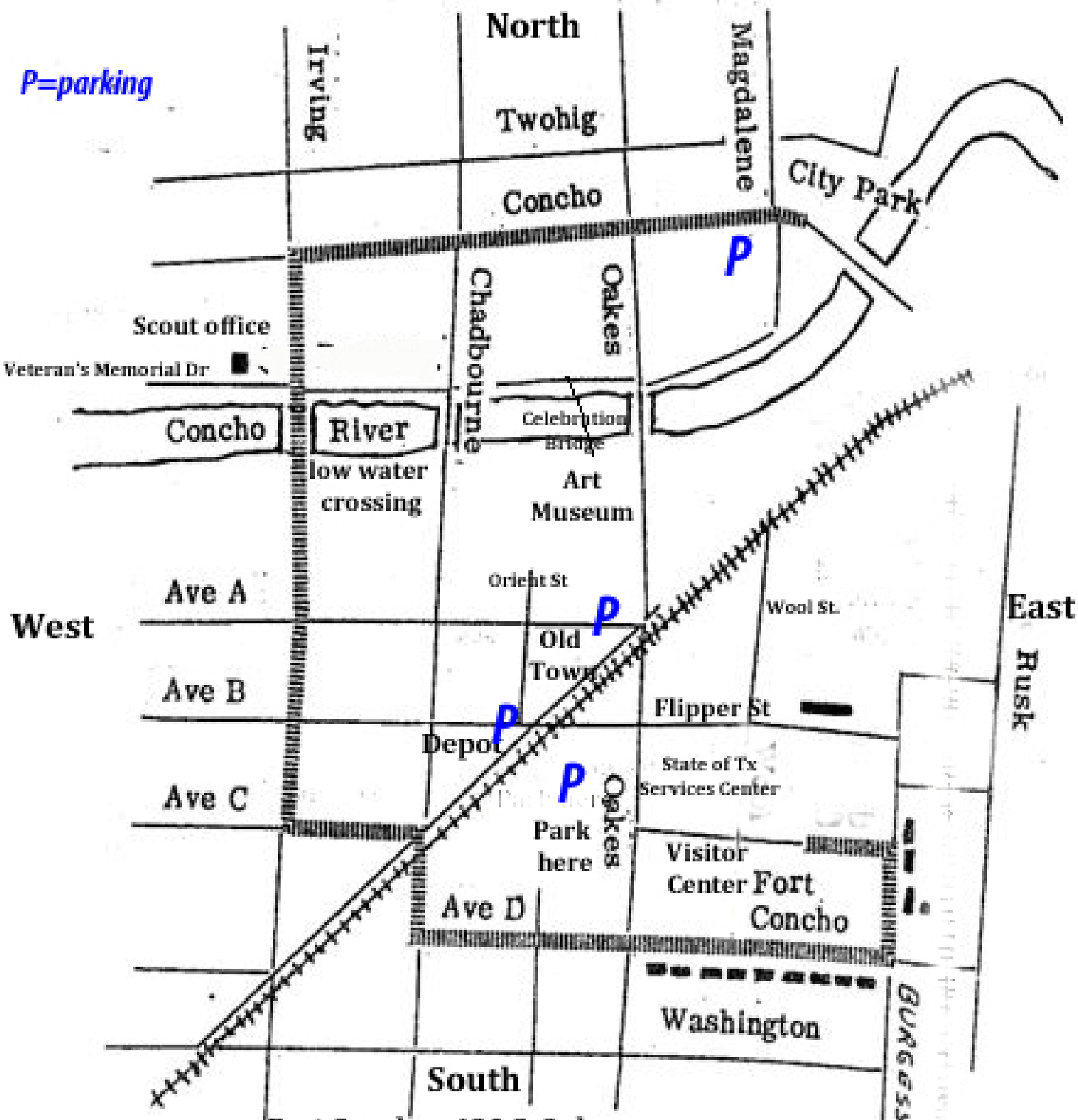
<https://texasarchive.org/search/page#search/1/fulltext:miss%20wool%20of%20america>

Agriculture practices have changed and this title is no longer used; however, the sheep represent a proud history of the area. Stop by the **Downtown San Angelo** office at 24 West Concho to pick up a map to locate the sheep throughout San Angelo.

The San Angelo Fine Arts Museum is a wonderful place to visit. Check out details about the museum online at

<https://www.samfa.org/admissions-hours>

Take time to visit the fourteen story Cactus Hotel at 36 E. Twohig. The structure was built by Conrad Hilton in 1929. It has a beautiful ground floor and mezzanine.



Fort Concho - 630 S. Oakes

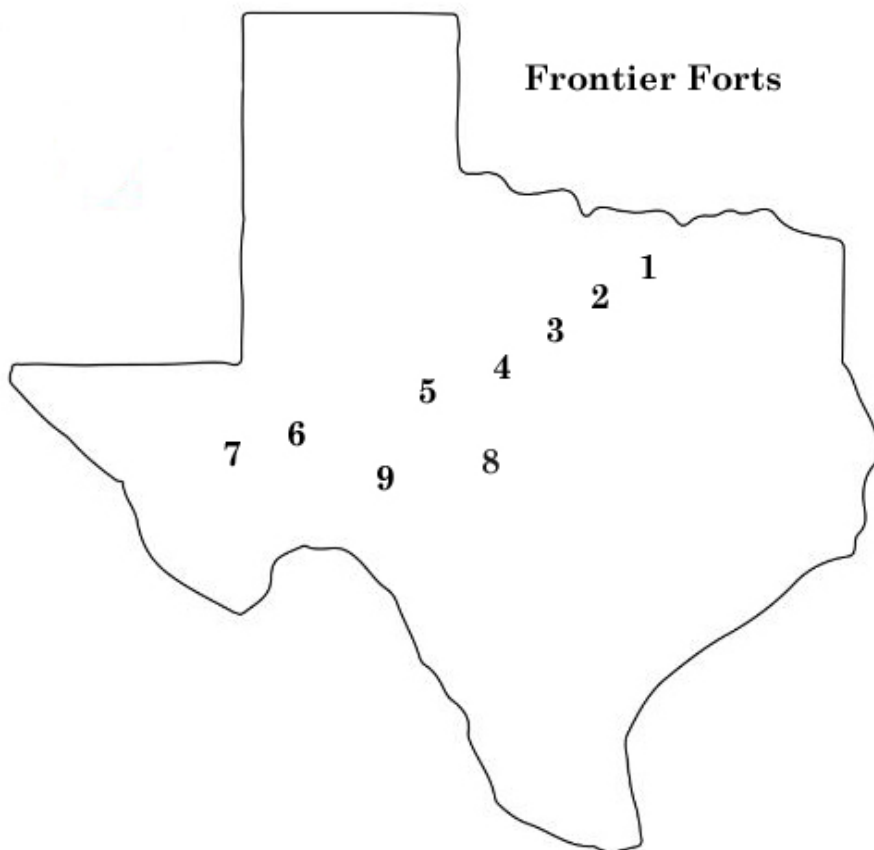
Trail Depot and Museum- 703 S. Chadbourne

Historic Trail Part 1 Fort Concho

Fort Concho was established on December 4, 1867. Forts were built (see Texas map below) to provide protection for mail, stage and freight carriers plus people moving into territory once occupied by Native Americans. Patrols also mapped the vast West Texas region. Fort Concho was located at the junction of the North and South Concho Rivers. Building was slow due to the lack of materials. Muddy roads and flooded rivers hindered delivery of goods in a timely manner.

It did not take long for enterprising people to arrive to buy land for farming and ranching or start businesses that supplied goods to the fort or cater to the needs of the soldiers. The post surgeon at the Fort, William M. Notson, stated that traders and at least five businesses were in place by May 1869. (Record for the month of May, 1869) The little community called “over the river” was not a place for families to live. The town of Ben Ficklin, originally a mail service station, four miles south became the county seat with a courthouse and jail and thrived until a flood in 1882 destroyed homes, businesses, and livestock. Over 65 people died. The county seat was then moved to San Angelo and a large courthouse and jail were built. San Angelo began to flourish as a town once this change occurred.

The fort was abandoned 20 June 1889. San Angelo residents reported that they missed hearing the bugle call and cannon fire to start the morning and retreat and cannon fire at sunset. (Rose Austin, *Farm and Ranch*, 1 Dec 1935)



1. Fort Richardson, Jacksboro, 1866-1878
2. Fort Belknap, near Newcastle, 1851-1876
3. Fort Griffin, Albany, 1867-1881
4. Fort Chadbourne, near Bronte, 1852-1867
- 5. Fort Concho, San Angelo, 1867-1889**
6. Fort Stockton, Fort Stockton, 1859-1861;
reestablished 1867-1886
7. Fort Davis, Fort Davis, 1854-1861;
reestablished 1867-1891
8. Fort McKavett, Fort McKavett, 1852-1859
Reestablished 1868-1883
9. Camp Lancaster, Sheffield, 1855-1861
Fort Lancaster, 1868

There were many Forts in Texas that are not referenced on the map to the left.

Go to <https://motivasi.my.id/> to view an excellent Texas map which includes additional Camps and Forts plus cattle trails.

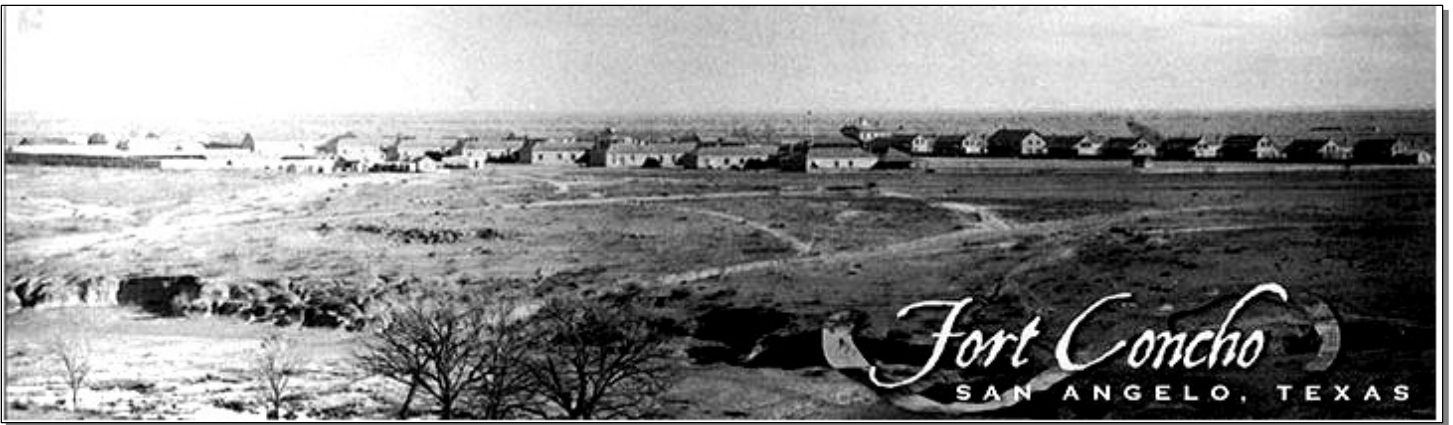


Photo courtesy of Fort Concho

Fort Concho parking is provided west of the Fort off of Oakes Street. As you make your way to the Visitor's Center, please read the historical markers.

1. The visitor's center is located in Barrack #1. There were six enlisted men's barracks in all with mess halls for each barrack. The building of the six barracks at Fort Concho was a slow and tedious process. By February, 1869, the first two barracks had been raised to the height of the stone walls. It was not until August of that year that the buildings were finally occupied, even though they weren't completely built. In November, 1870, stonework for all additional barracks and the guardhouse was complete; but they were not finished until the fall of 1871. Stone for the Fort's construction came from a quarry at Ben Ficklin, about four miles south of Fort Concho on the Middle Concho River. Mortar for the stonework was made of sand crushed from sandstone found nearby, and lime (burned in a lime-kiln) from the same limestone used for buildings.

Pecan timber was first used from trees found along the banks of the Conchos and sawed into lumber on steam-driven saws nearby. However, the hardness of the pecan, plus the cost of preparing, soon caused a change of materials. By 1870, pine and cypress lumber and shingles, window frames, glass, doors, and trimmings were freighted in from San Antonio and the Fredericksburg-Hill country area for most of the buildings.

2. Barrack #2 houses cannons and weaponry from the time period of the Fort.

3. Barracks #3 and #4, and the mess halls, are recreations of the buildings that once stood in the same location. Each barrack had a mess hall. These buildings will house book and research collections, office space, displays and public programs.

4. Barrack #5 houses an exhibit related to the life of the 19th century soldier. Notice the bedding, storage, and the pot-bellied stove that was used to heat the building. Uniforms worn by all soldiers were made of blue wool. Wool is a breathable fabric. Undergarments were cotton and linen. Sweat would be held by those fabrics and the wool would allow air in and cool the body even in high temperatures of West Texas. Open behind this barrack is the mess hall and kitchen. Please visit and read the posted sign for more information. Each barrack had its own mess hall.



5. Barrack #6 is open for special events or for rent.

Photo by Lisa Dennis Mahler

Look behind the Barracks and you will see a building with white shutters. This is the original fort stables. The building continues to be used for private events. A new building to the right of the stables is called the *Living History Stables* and this building houses displays and mules for you to view.

6. You are now at the end of the row of barracks. Between the last barrack building and the Commissary was a guardhouse and jail. It was built of the same materials as the barracks.

7. The Commissary was the first to be completed in January of 1868. It is the oldest building in San Angelo. To the right is the Quartermaster building; the second building to be completed. It has survived two major fires, masonry structural failure and neglect.

8. Next is the Headquarters building which was constructed in 1876. For three years (from 1878 to 1881) Fort Concho was Headquarters of the District of the Pecos in the Army Department of Texas. Business concerning the district, which included Forts Concho, Davis, Stockton and Griffin, as well as eight sub-posts, was conducted here along with the usual Post affairs. There are two plaques on the front of the Headquarters Museum Building. This building became a museum in 1929 when Mrs. Ginevra Bell Wood Carson (1872-1958) raised the necessary funds. She is credited with spearheading the efforts to save the Fort.

9. Located on the north side of the HQ building you will see memorials to fallen soldier. The markers represent individuals who served during the Indian Wars and received the Medal of Honor for their service.

10. Located behind the HQ building is the home and office of the first architect in San Angelo, Oscar Ruffini. The structure is a typical wooden clapboard home of the 19th century and was similar to many early homes in San Angelo. Ruffini built several courthouses in West Texas including Concho County, Crockett County, Sutton County, Tom Green County. He also built many homes and businesses. The clapboard home stood on Chadbourne street until 1951 when it was then moved to Fort Concho. Ruffini passed away in 1957 at the age of 98. He is buried in Fairmount Cemetery located at 1120 W. Avenue N in San Angelo.

11. The large building south of the Headquarters building is the Post Hospital. The building, completed in 1870, is almost a twin of the hospital located at Fort Richardson near Jacksboro, Texas. It was the largest and finest structure at the fort. A strange thing happened one night at the post hospital, involving a black soldier named "Dead" Ellis. Ellis apparently became so intoxicated one night that the muscles in his body went rigid. Ellis was near death from alcohol poisoning, but had not yet "passed on." Ellis' condition fooled the men who happened upon his body, and the stiff soldier was taken to the post hospital, pronounced dead, and laid out in the "dead room" for burial on the next day. Ellis' friends gathered by the coffin that night to lament his demise. A jug of whiskey passed

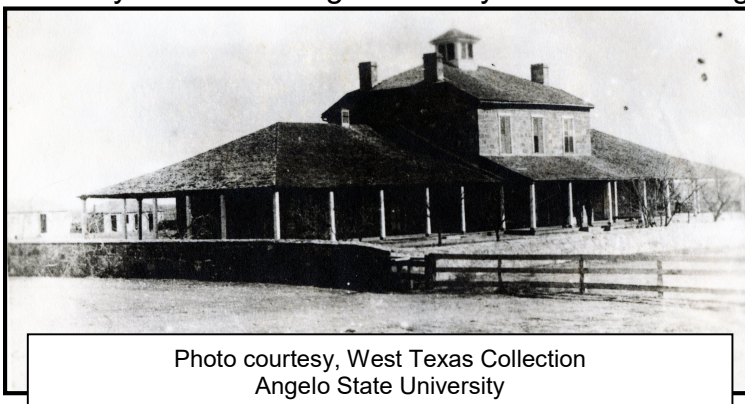


Photo courtesy, West Texas Collection
Angelo State University

between the mourners. All went well until sometime after midnight when one of the men leaned over the coffin for a final, acrimonious good-bye. Ellis twitched! The mourner looked again. Ellis twitched again! "That man ain't dead! He's getting up!" the mourner yelled. Almost instantaneously all the men in the room were getting up, too, and diving through the first available window or door. When Ellis saw the coffin walls surrounding him, he was

supposed to have nearly killed himself for real by jumping through a window to get out. He survived his wild night to live a long life, forever pegged with the name "Dead" Ellis - the man who came back from death. The hospital was struck by lightning and burned in 1911 and was finally razed in 1929. The hospital was reconstructed in 1988.

13. To the west of the hospital is one of the last structures completed at the Fort, the Schoolhouse/Chapel. On February 22, 1879, the structure was dedicated and described to be the "best furnished room in the post." The building was used for a school, a chapel, and for social gatherings at the Fort such as dances.

14. The row of houses to the west of the schoolhouse are the officer's quarters.



Photo courtesy, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University

Note: the picture was taken after the Fort had closed and these buildings became private residences.

15. Officer quarter #9's building plan and form was very similar to #8 and the original #1.

16. Construction on O.Q.#8 commenced in 1871 and was finished in 1872. Like most of the quarters, it was remodeled some sixteen years following the military evacuation and in 1936, a stone addition was completed at the rear of the structure. O.Q.#8's front entrance is different because of the double doors.

17. O.Q.#7, began in 1876 and finished in 1877, was the last officer's quarters built on the post. This was a duplex.

18. A fire in 1961 destroyed much of the second floor and the staircase of O.Q.#6. This building was identical to Numbers 2, 4 and 5. On the west side of the building around the second story windows, are pieces of metal used to hold window shutters open. You will see several buildings with these metal pieces.

19. O.Q.#5 was in such poor condition that the building was reduced to ruins as a safety precaution.

20. O.Q.#4 now houses the E. H. Danner Museum of Telephony. The museum house models of telephone from Alexander Graham Bell's "Gallows Frame Phone" to inventions through the decades.

21. O.Q.#3 may have been the first quarters built. It is larger than the other single quarters and appears to be of better quality than many of the comparable existing structures. It was used as

quarters for the commanding officer until O.Q.#1 was finished. It has one of the few relatively intact original interiors.

22. O.Q.#2 was one of the first five officer's quarters built and was finished by March 1, 1870. The parlor room was the site of the first wedding at the fort, that of Miss Jessie Caldwell and Lt. Byron Dawson on April 26, 1870. This building has 3 chimneys. The exterior still has its original appearance.

23. Officer's Quarters #1 was started in August, 1870, but was not completed until 1875. Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson moved into the building in 1875, and during his tenure had an office wing added on the west side, a kitchen added at the south end, and some stone stables constructed behind the house. The O.Q.#1 is 2 stories high and has 4 chimneys.

24. Look North as you stand at O.Q. #1. You will see the bandstand. Music was very important for morale at a remote West Texas fort. The Bandstand was reconstructed after the Texas Historical Commission reviewed research and documentation submitted by the fort. It was completed in 2017 and is used for special performances.

25. The parade ground on the fort was an open space used for assembling troops for various reasons: pay, ceremonial, drill, inspection, troop review or practice marching. The flagpole would be an important part of the morning reveille and evening retreat routine.

25. The last, but not least, part of the visit to Fort Concho is located west across the street. The San Angelo Chapter of the NAACP and the City of San Angelo built this memorial to honor the many African American men who served at Fort Concho. On July 28, 1866, the U.S. government formed six regiments that became the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry. The U.S. Army offered better opportunities for many former slaves. Three decades of service at various forts throughout the west saw these brave men traversing unknown territory in all types of weather protected pioneers, mail carriers, freighters, farmers and cattle ranchers from bandits, horse thieves and the last of the Native Americans that tried to hold onto their natural habitat. These soldiers served with distinction, several earning the Medal of Honor. They became known as "Buffalo Soldiers". For additional information about African-American Medal of Honor recipients go to:

ps.gov/chyo/learn/historyculture/medal-of-honor.htm



Pictured left
Buffalo Soldier Living Historians
dressed in period clothing. They
tell the stories of the brave men
that served the frontier. In the
middle is Allen Mack, who
travels the country teaching
people about African Americans
that served in all wars including
the American Revolution.
Contact him at
amack@ourhist.org or visit his
website: <https://www.ourhist.org/>

The 10th Cavalry arrived at Fort Concho in the spring of 1875 and remained until 1882. Other Buffalo Regiments served at the fort between 1869 and 1885.

Henry O. Flipper was the first African American graduate of West Point and became a commissioned officer. Flipper served at Fort Concho in 1880 and a street is named for him on the Fort grounds.

Elijah Cox enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1870 and was part of the 25th Infantry Regiment. He was never stationed at Fort Concho but San Angelo became his home. Locally he was known as "Old Cox". He learned to play guitar and fiddle and played in dance halls, saloons and socials at Fort Concho. He died in 1941 at the age of 98 and is buried at Fairmount Cemetery here in San Angelo.

The Fort's closing was an inevitable event, brought about by the growth of San Angelo, the coming of the railroad, and the diminished need for a frontier military establishment. The flag was lowered for the last time on June 20, 1889.

When finally abandoned, the stone buildings and the land on which they stand, reverted back to the original land owners, Adams and Wickes. The Army had only been a rent-paying tenant, and the land owners reaped the benefit of the improvements the Army had made. In 1905, the Concho Realty Company was formed. The Company purchased the Fort grounds with all the structures for \$15,000. A real estate addition was then organized and the various buildings sold to individuals. The preservation of the existing buildings and the restoration of the destroyed ones was begun in 1930 by Mrs. Ginevra Wood Carson. She moved the West Texas Museum from the county courthouse to the headquarters building and renamed it Fort Concho Museum. Fort Concho has since acquired all of the property you see here today. Improvements to the Fort continues and the site is considered one of the best-preserved historic forts of the west.

The Trail—Part 2-Concho Avenue

1. This part of the trail begins at the City Park, located at the corner of Magdalen Street and Concho Avenue. In the northwest corner of the park is the town's Central Firehouse which is a bed and breakfast business today. The building was built in 1929. The park formed the eastern boundary of Bart DeWitt's original purchase. It was also where the first dairy was located and where cattle were slaughtered for Fort Concho.
2. This section of town, some 320 acres of land, was purchased by Bart DeWitt for one dollar an acre with a loan from San Antonio investor Marcus Koenigheim. The land was marked off into town lots in 1870 and sold to the general public. DeWitt named Magdalen Street after his wife's sister, Mother Magdalen of the Ursuline Academy in San Antonio. Concho Avenue was named for the river.
3. Fort soldiers called the community that catered to them "over the river". **Note:** On the 1870 and 1880 census, the community was listed as Fort Concho. Businesses included many saloons, gambling dens, ladies of the evening, mercantile stores and wagon yards/livery stables. "Over the River" was a dangerous place especially at night. Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, commander at Fort Concho, 1875-1882, stated in a letter dated May 4, 1875, to his wife "It (San Angelo) consists of two dozen mud and stockage buildings or rather hovels. Every house is a whiskey shop or something worse." He continues in his letter, "The sheriff of this county is a gambler and keeps a drinking saloon in the city aforesaid. He is as great a rascal as any, no doubt."

4. The town of Ben Ficklin, 4 miles south, was a stage coach stop and became the county seat with a stone courthouse, jail, and businesses. Benjamin Ficklin had purchased 640 acres on the south Concho riverfront which was land along the San Antonio – El Paso mail route. Ficklin died in 1871 and his friend, Francis Taylor inherited the land. Taylor along with William Kelly and Charles Metcalfe, laid out a townsite. Tom Green county was organized in 1874 and Ben Ficklin was named the county seat.
5. The picture below is a larger adobe house and includes shingles, a wooden front porch, chimneys and windows. Most early adobe houses would have been only one room. This structure would not have been available when people first arrived in San Angelo. Dugouts or wagons would be the first living quarters for early residents. Supplies for building wooden structures was slow. Everything had to come by wagon from San Antonio across streams, rivers, hills. When it rained roads became so muddy that wagons would have to wait for roads to dry out before proceeding. Water ways would have to recede before crossing.



Photo courtesy, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University.

6. Early settlers, Bart Dewitt and Kate Veck, while visiting one day, decided that the town be called San Angela since “over the river” was not exactly a proper name for a community. The U. S. Post Office changed it to San Angelo believing that it was a better combination of words. The town began to grow quickly when San Angelo became the county seat in 1882 after Ben Ficklin had been washed away that year in a huge flood that killed 65 people.
7. Walk on the north side of Concho Avenue going west. On this side of the block, Mrs. Annie Tankersley, the first white female pioneer in the Concho Valley, operated the old Tankersley Hotel. A strong-minded woman, she faced down an angry mob of soldiers during the Soldiers Riots of 1881. **Note:** See #24 for additional information about the riot. Her first hotel, a wooden structure, burned and she replaced it with a fireproof adobe structure, but it was destroyed in the Ben Ficklin flood of 1882.
8. Across the street on your left, you will see a long building with large arched windows. This building was built in 1928 for the Terraplane and Packard Automobile Dealership. International Harvester Co. was located here from 1933 until it was heavily damaged by fire in 1967. The cast stone on the front of this building was designed and cast by Dwight Holmes, a local artist. The building now houses several businesses.

9. Here at the corner of Oakes and Concho was the beginning of San Angelo, Block 1. Oakes Street was named by DeWitt for a Union Colonel, James Oakes, who had once fought an Indian battle in the western reaches of the Concho. The first businesses established soon after Fort Concho began were built of pickets, plastered with mud and covered with buffalo hides. Early businesses were Link & Lachner (former Army sergeants), Hart & Curry, Bart DeWitt, Johnnie Earle and W.S. Veck.
10. On the northeast corner, next to **Déjà Vu**, (now a parking lot), William S. Veck made his mark on San Angela. Following the Civil War, Veck had won a job as government wagonmaster in 1865, which brought him to Ft. Concho in 1868. He claimed land on North Concho and began to ranch there. He married Katalina Wuertenberg in 1872, and built the first store in San Angelo the same year. A saloon and his home were also in this location. Veck tore down the saloon and built the Veck-Sterrett Bank, designed by Oscar Ruffini, in 1884. This was Ruffini's first San Angelo building designed after the construction of the Courthouse. Veck was appointed postmaster in 1880 and moved the post office from Ft. Concho and placed it in his store, thus the first post office in San Angelo was located in the Veck-Sterrett Building. By 1885, 3200 people lived in San Angelo. Below is a photo of Concho Avenue, circa 1900. The Veck-Sterrett building is identified.



Photo courtesy,
West Texas Collection,
Angelo State University

11. Across the street in 1885, where a parking lot is today, the first newspaper office in San Angelo, *The Concho Times* began business. The first issue went on sale April 24, 1880. James Kibbee, age 22, was the publisher. The yearly subscription was \$2.00. Other newspapers to print in town in the coming years were the *San Angelo Enterprise*, the *San Angelo Press*, and the *San Angelo Standard*. Only the Standard remained in business for years to come.

Cross Oakes Street and continue west on Concho.

12. The building that houses **Confetti Antiques** was once a gas station. Notice how the front entrance is at an angle where cars would pull in for service. The brick building was originally an auto sales and garage and was built about 1920. The antique store is very big and youth must be supervised if you visit.

13. The **Sassy Fox** dress shop building is over 100 years old and was originally part of the auto sales and garage next door. Original ceilings and walls still exist. A 36" dry stack stone wall was stabilized when repair and remodeling began in 1996 by Barbara and Alfred Strain, owners of Sassy Fox. Prior to the brick building, this location had various businesses of basic wooden structures selling books, meats, fruits, groceries or harnesses.
14. The parking lot between **Sassy Fox** and **Miss Hattie's Restaurant** was the location of a large mercantile store called *S. Lapowski and Brothers*. (You can see the business in the photo on the previous page.) There was also a Lapowski store in Abilene and Colorado City during the 1890s. The brothers were Sam, Jacob and Nathan. The brothers immigrated from Poland. An interesting part of the Lapowski family history involves Sam's son, Clarence, who changed his last name to Dillon in 1901 and became one of the wealthiest men in America by 1957.
15. Across the street at 35 East Concho is **Eggemeyers**, established in 1988. This building was constructed in 1911 as a Buick dealership. In 1927, a Plymouth dealership took over the building until 1935 when Angelo Spring and Axle purchased the property. Bobby and Karen Eggemeyer, current owners and proprietors, had their son design the exterior of the building. It is fashioned after the buildings in Fredericksburg, TX. Inside, the building has the original tin ceiling. Light was provided by the huge skylight in the back of the building. The Eggemeyers recycled materials from other old San Angelo buildings including lights from Montgomery Ward, the mezzanine from Holcombe-Blanton, and the bricks (outside sidewalk) with the stars imprinted on them from **M.L. Leddy's**. (a well-known boot maker)

In 2019, Eggemeyers expanded into the building west. The archway and location of skylights is original. During the 1920s this building was an auto sales business. A framed preservation article is posted on the archway. Notice the width of the wall (two feet).

Note: Please supervise children if you visit Eggemeyers.

16. Continue walking on the north side of Concho Street. You will see the restored buildings of the *San Angelo National Bank* and the *Johnson and Taylor Dry Goods Store*. **Miss Hattie's Restaurant** is located in these two buildings. Next door, the *Schwartz and Raas* general merchandising store was built. Look up and see the dates at the top of the buildings: 1884, 1885 and 1886. **Please read the historical marker on the restaurant building**. The marker gives the history of these early businesses. The original buildings are an important part of historic Concho Avenue. Ken and Brenda Gunter began renovations on the bank and dry good store in the 1970s. Brenda is currently San Angelo's Mayor.
17. **J. Wilde's** occupies the *Schwartz and Raas* building. The store's inventory included dry goods, clothing and groceries. Louis Schwartz immigrated from Germany in 1871 and arrived in San Angelo in 1879. Joseph C. Raas became a business partner around 1884. Schwartz and Raas built their store in 1886. *Schwartz and Raas* was a very successful business and sales of \$1000 per day was not unusual. The partnership ended in 1895. Raas moved to California and Schwartz continued sales in a different location in town as the *L. Schwartz & Co.* (partnering with Leon Mosbacher) until the business was sold in 1909 to *Baker-Hemphill*. Schwartz eventually moved to New York City and became a real estate agent. Raas moved to California where he became a merchant in wholesale liquor and at his death in 1928 was the head of the Lyons' California Glace (candied) Fruit Company, the largest of its kind in the world.
18. Look across the street at the row of businesses starting with **Jesse Rose Dress Shop**, owned by Barbara Strain. Located in this area in the early years were San Angelo's first bakery, a carriage display shop, and a carriage factory. The building recently was upgraded and divided

for individual businesses. The metal ceilings inside are original and the rock and concrete walls between each of the buildings are 2 feet thick.

19. Notice the vacant lot on the south side of Concho Avenue next to the old hotel. This may have been the location of the *Gray Mule Saloon*, described by ranchman John A. Loomis as "a vicious place." In his memoirs, he wrote: "Due to a scarcity of lumber and carpenters, sheeting partitions were common. There was such a partition between the *Gray Mule* and a small restaurant. One evening, when I reached town too late for supper at the hotel, I went into this "eatery" next door. While I was eating, I heard a row start in the saloon. As this was the usual thing in the *Gray Mule*, I paid no attention to it until a man suddenly came head first through the muslin partition, barely missing my table, and fell on the floor on his back. After he was helped to his feet he soon recovered and left, swearing vengeance. Later I learned that the fellow got his vengeance that evening. He had another fight with the same man. With a razor folded over his fist he struck the man in the neck and almost cut his head off."

An early day preacher was A. J. Potter. He was not afraid to go into the saloons and got the reputation of being "the fighting parson." The story goes that to raise money to build a Methodist Church he visited the Wilson Saloon with M.B. Pulliam and a cowboy said "Wal, we'll all give you what we make off this next round of Monte." \$800 was raised and Reverend Potter politely thanks the cowboys and went on his way. (San Angelo Standard, Sep 8, 1929)

20. 18 East Concho, you will see ***Legend Jewelers***, now housed in a building that was initially a saloon. The ceiling is original. This jewelry store (along with Holland Jewelers at 501 W Beauregard) sells the famous Concho Pearl from the Tampico pearly mussel. The door to the right of this store is called Miss Hattie's Door. The rooms upstairs were rented out by the various occupants from the late 1800's through the 1940's. Tickets to view the museum upstairs can be purchased in the jewelry store. \$6.00 per person
Legend Jewelers is open Tuesday-Friday, 9 am to 5:30 pm and Saturday 9 am to 5 pm.

The next group of buildings were various businesses over the years including offices, hardware store, saloon, jewelry, tailor and even a domino parlor. The structures were made of wood but by 1889 the stores were built of stone.

21. Bernie C. Alexander established "Concho Saddlers" in 1890 and opened his shop at 8 East Concho in 1902. About 1905, the business moved to larger location on Chadbourne Street. The firm changed hands several times over the next 80 years, but was finally moved back to this location. Famous customers included Will Rogers, Jack Dempsey and Pancho Villa. Mr. Alexander and Robert James Andrews were partners. R. J. Andrews designed his own style saddle and were made to order for rodeo and stage celebrities. His handmade saddles are a true collector's item.
22. ***The Cactus Book Store***, established in 1995 is located, at 4 East Concho. The store's specialty is Texana, and offers one of Texas' largest selections. In 2019, the shop was featured on Bob Phillips show the "Texas Country Reporter." You can still view the story on YouTube. The store has received many honors including "Best Western History Book Store" and "Reader's Choice Award." This unique shop offers a sizable section of fiction by Texas and Southwest authors and you can find leather-bound classic literature, children's classics and cookbooks.
23. On the corner of Chadbourne and Concho is the ***Heritage Haus Clocks, Fans and Gifts*** business. The building was built in the 1880's and was originally a mercantile store, then it

became the *Arc Light Saloon* until 1918 (prohibition). Saloon keeper Thomas McCloskey kept good order and catered to the more respectable customers. He was a Canadian ex-heavyweight prize fighter, and a good businessman who won the respect of most people in San Angelo. Later, when the Theo Alexander family operated a restaurant from 1925-1962, they had a mural painted on the east wall by a New Mexico artist W. E. Newton. The painting shows local citizens standing at the bar of the old saloon. The mural was painted from an old photograph made by M.C. Ragsdale. The mural is still there and visitors are welcome to come in to see it.

Note: Fairmount Cemetery (1120 W. Avenue N) has a statue of McCloskey. Frank Teich was commissioned to sculpt the statue. The symbol of the Knights of Pythias (a fraternal organization; members were to be humanitarians) is carved into the pedestal of the statue.

24. On the southeast corner (across the street from the **Heritage Haus Clocks**) is a large, six-story brick building. This corner has always been a location for a hotel.

The first hotel at this location was built in 1878 by Ernest Nimitz. It was called *The Nimitz Hotel*. Ernest was the brother of Carl Nimitz that owned a hotel in Fredericksburg, TX. **Note:** Carl was the grandfather of Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. The hotel had cheesecloth partitions separating rooms. According to John Loomis, in 1881, William Watkins, a Black soldier, was killed in Charlie Wilson's saloon by Thomas McCarthy, a rancher from Brady Creek. (East of San Angelo) This unfortunate incident led to a riot by the Black troopers at the fort who felt justice would not be served due to the prejudice of white men handling the case. The soldiers surrounded the Nimitz Hotel where they thought McCarthy was being held and demanded that he be surrendered to them. Before the affair had been settled the Nimitz Hotel had been riddled with bullets. A precarious peace finally came with the arrival of Ranger Captain Bryan Marsh and a number of Texas Rangers who warned Colonel B.H. Grierson to keep the troops at the fort. Incidents such as this that gave the "town across the river" such a bad reputation. This became known as the Soldiers Riot of 1881. **Note:** Thomas McCarthy was found "not guilty" by a jury in Kimble County.

In 1893, Nimitz's cook got into an argument and killed his helper in the kitchen. He tried to cover up his deed by setting fire to the kitchen. Although the entire hotel burned down, the cook's crime was still revealed. Nimitz then moved his hotel to another location, and a two-story, 40 room *Landon Hotel* was built on this site. Many business men set up offices here. On August 10, 1902, the Landon was also destroyed by fire. There was an explosion in the kitchen, and the night clerk roused Mr. and Mrs. Landon who proceeded to raise an alarm for the two volunteer fire departments. Mrs. Landon and 7 others died in the fire.

A new three-story *Landon Hotel*, pictured below, was then built of brick; but it, too, was destroyed by fire in 1925. It was said that the heat from those flames was so intense that even the wooden paving blocks on Chadbourne began to smolder.



Photo courtesy of the West Texas Collection, Angelo State University

The five-story *Naylor Hotel* was built in the same location in the 1927. In 1955 the building was renovated and renamed the *Town House*. The hotel closed in 1983 and sits empty.



Photo courtesy of the West Texas Collection, Angelo State University

25. September 7, 1908. the first trolleys of the San Angelo Power and Traction Company rolled up Chadbourne Street from the Landon Hotel. The trolley took people to the new subdivision of Lake View, located some three miles North of San Angelo, to try to interest them in buying lots there. The streetcar changed owners several times and was purchased in 1909 by Sam Crowther, who renamed it the San Angelo Street Railway Company. It went out of business in late 1915, but the old rails are still in the street, underneath the pavement.

Chadbourne Street was named in honor of 2nd Lieutenant Theodore Lincoln Chadbourne. who at the age of 24, was killed on May 9, 1846 at the battle of Resaca de la Palma in the Mexican-American War. Fort Chadbourne in Runnels County was also named for him.

The streets in this area were paved with cypress wooden blocks (about the size of 2x4s). One local resident remembers that when it rained, some of the blocks would "pop up" out of the street. In 1886, here in the middle of this intersection, the first bale of cotton grown in Tom Green County was auctioned off to the sounds of the San Angelo Brass Band.

26. West of the Heritage Haus Clocks business is a parking lot. There once stood a picket-type log house built by Joseph Weber who was a barber. When the circuit riders came to town, services were held at the Weber home, with Helen Weber playing the organ. Later, Macarthur Cullen (M.C.) Ragsdale married Liza Weber and bought this property. There he built his photography studio. He had made his first visit to Fort Concho in 1875, and moved to San Angelo in 1880. Ragsdale is credited with recording the pictorial history of the community. He died in San Angelo in 1944 at the age of 95.

27. On the Southwest corner is the **Angry Cactus** restaurant. The original building was built by Oscar Ruffini and was to become a real estate, livestock and wool commission business. At one time, there was an open air movie theater located on the roof of the building. The last business to occupy this space before the restaurant opened was **Cole's Army Surplus**, (now located at 118 N. Chadbourne) **Cole's** was destroyed by fire in 1984. For years this corner was a blight for Concho Avenue. The building was covered in plywood and artists had painted scenes. Chef Tim Condon saw a great opportunity and built the **Angry Cactus** restaurant. It opened in 2016. One of the original paintings from the plywood hangs behind the bar and features Pancho Villa.

28. Occupying most of the block on the south side of Concho Avenue was the Elkhorn Wagon Yard owned by James W. Johnson. The yard was one of three yards in town in the 1880's. Each yard was from 300 to 400 feet square and well equipped. They had small pens, several sheds and a camp-house in addition to the main building where the feed was stored. The early day wagon yard took the place of hotels and garages. Small towns in the surrounding area depended on San Angelo for food, lumber, wire, windmills, clothing and furniture and many ranchmen would make only two trips a year to San Angelo bringing their families. They would camp in the wagon yards and bring their bedrolls and food and cook over stoves or camp fires. In the early 1900's, there were as many as eight yards in San Angelo; but after the automobile came to town, Elkhorn Wagon Yard was, by 1929, the only one in town. In 1943, even this yard folded.

29. The building at 14-16 West Concho cost \$75,000 to build in 1928. It became Ragsdale Auto Company. M.C. Ragsdale had retired from the photography business to sell automobiles. His son, Henry took over the auto business.

30. 18 West Concho is known as the "Freeze Building". It was built in 1887 and is one of the oldest buildings in San Angelo. It was built for Peter K. Freeze who was a blacksmith and wheelwright. The building was used as a stable, grocery store, saloon, offices, auto repair, furniture warehouse and loan company over the last 136 years. Today the building is owned by the Sugg family who own cattle ranches.



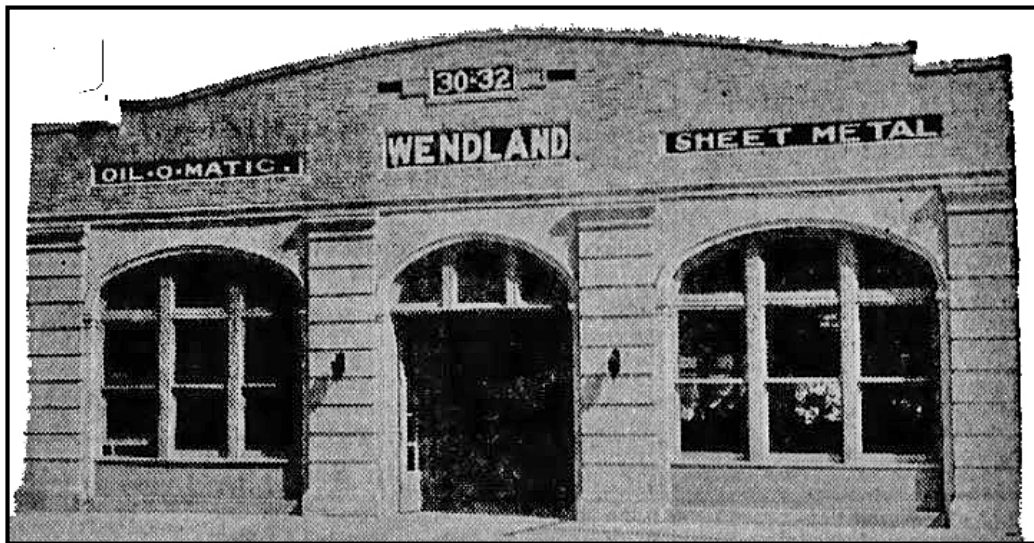
31. Next to the Freeze building is a parking lot but was the location of the first radio station between Dallas and El Paso in the 1920s. Henry Ragsdale built KGKL. The radio station had a 10-watt transmitter and was located on the 2nd floor of the building.

32. 24-28 West Concho was one of two locations for *Findlater Hardware*. This store opened in 1895 and stayed in business until 1968. The office for **Downtown San Angelo** and **ARock Salon** occupy the building today. John Findlater was an Irish immigrant and Texas was

his chosen destination. John was well-educated. He became a rancher and also began to erect windmills in 1888. The hardware store was opened in 1895. There were two locations for Findlater Hardware: 207-209 S Chadbourne and 24 West Concho. For many years, Findlater was the largest hardware store between Fort Worth and El Paso.

33. 30-32 West Concho

Notice the cornerstone "Wendland 1927"; this represents the date this structure was built. In 1909, Herman G. Wendland came to San Angelo as foreman of the sheet metal department of the John Findlater hardware store. Wendland bought the sheet metal business from Findlater. This was the location of his early sheet metal plant. Today **Wendland** is located at 601 West 11th here in San Angelo and engineers and fabricates custom ASME Code pressure vessels and tanks, for industrial infrastructure and commercial buildings. The end markets include water and wastewater plants, midstream natural gas processing and commercial HVAC systems.



Courtesy of Wendland Manufacturing

You are now close to the corner of Concho and Irving Streets.

Part 3 of the Trail

At this point you may continue walking to the Railroad Depot, Old Town Historic District, the Museum of Fine Arts and the Celebration Bridge or you may return to your car and drive to the depot.

If driving, by car, return to the corner of Concho and Irving and go south across the low water crossing.

1. Cross the North Concho River at the Irving Street low-water crossing. In 1867 the river was just a narrow stream flowing through this area. Look east down the river and imagine the soldiers crossing the river from Fort Concho, entering San Angela on Chadbourne Street.

Note: look to your right before you travel across the low water crossing. The building you see is the Scout office where patches may be purchased.

The office is open M-F, 9 am to 5 pm. Phone number is 325-655-7107

As you come to the crest of the hill before you start down to the river, look all around and try to visualize how this country looked when Fayette Tankersley wrote: "The grass was stirrup-high and there were no trees except along the river. Everywhere there was wild animal life, great flocks of

wild turkeys, antelope and deer in herds of hundreds, and in the distance, they looked like great swarms of flies. There were coyotes and panthers, and streams alive with fish. The beavers-built dams in all the streams" That is how this land, the very land you are standing on, looked less than 150 years ago.

2. Continue south on Irving until you see the Railroad Station. This depot was the divisional headquarters for the Old Kansas City, Mexico & Orient Railroad that reached San Angelo in 1909. The "Orient" Railroad had begun five years earlier when Arthur E. Stillwell organized the line in Wichita, Kansas, with the hope of linking up with the port of Topolobampo, Mexico, on the Gulf of California. From there it was a sea voyage to Oriental ports.

During the excitement of the Orient's arrival, businessmen in town had raised \$40,000 to build a line from San Angelo to Sterling City. When the line opened in 1910, it was immediately sold to Santa Fe, which violated the agreements made during fund raising. Santa Fe finally agreed to return the \$40,000 to San Angelo, but stipulated that the money be spent on a community project. The money was spent to purchase 30 acres along the North Concho River, now known as "Santa Fe Park" and includes the downtown golf course.

Santa Fe bought out the Orient in 1928. At one time a train every hour rolled through San Angelo carrying equipment west and oil east from the West Texas oil boom in the mid-twenties.

Passenger service was discontinued in 1965.

Historic Orient-Santa Fe Depot, Inc. began renovation of the depot in 1988 with volunteers and donations. City officials stepped in with federal funding to complete the restoration. The depot houses a museum for railroad and city memorabilia. The museum is open Friday, 1 pm to 5 pm; Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm; Sunday, 1 pm to 5 pm. The 2nd Saturday of every month is Family Day. Phone number is 325-486-2140. Their website: <https://www.sanangelorailway.org/>

3. Across Chadbourne Street you will see the old Santa Fe Freight Station. This has been transformed into a new Senior Citizens Center and headquarters for the Recreation Department.
4. Look for the building that has 618 Station painted on the side. It was built in 1926. This building housed the offices and facilities of the *DeCoty Coffee Company* from 1937 until 1962. The company started in August 1929 and was owned by C.T. Ducote, Sr. and his son Curry Ducote. They sold coffee under the brand name "Red Triangle. The company is currently located at 1920 Austin Street and still owned by the Ducote family and continues to sell coffee, teas and spices.

Old Town Historic District

Continue walking past the train depot until you come to historic buildings. Old Town was created to preserve historic buildings.



The white church is a reproduction of the building that Oscar Ruffini (San Angelo's first architect) designed and built in 1886 for the Presbyterians. The church originally stood on the corner of Irving and College where the current sanctuary is located.

Photo by Lisa Dennis Mahler

A. J. Baker Bank was built in 1885. The original location was at 113 South Chadbourne Street. Andrew Jackson Baker was born and raised in Mississippi but after the Civil War he moved to Texas where opportunities were in abundance. He engaged in mercantile and banking businesses. He served as a Texas legislator and later became the Land Commissioner under Governor Charles Culberson.

Camuñez Grocery

Reynaldo Camuñez (1882-1966) was born at Ben Ficklin into one of the first farm families in Tom Green County. He married Josefa Lara in 1909. He was involved in freighting building materials, ranch supplies, gasoline and groceries to ranches and towns in West Texas. Reynaldo and Josefa operated the family grocery store at 328 West 14th Street for 49 years. Reynaldo and Josefa were insistent that their children get a good education. The separate school for Hispanic students in San Angelo only allowed an elementary education. In order to further the education of daughter, Eva, the parents enrolled her in the Incarnate Word Academy in San Antonio. She earned enough credits to return to San Angelo and enter the high school. In 1930 she became the first Hispanic to graduate from San Angelo High School. Eva attended college and became a teacher. She taught school in Mertzon but had to commute from San Angelo because no one would rent her a room. She rode with shepherders or rode the train to work. In 1937, she was hired to teach in Ballinger where the school was one room, seven grade levels, 40 desks and 200 students.



During WWII, she moved to Washington DC to work in the State Department. In 1948 she married Art Tucker, an independent oil producer. Art and Eva were wise with their investments and from this grew a charitable foundation that has given thousands of dollars to the Catholic Church, Angelo State University, Fort Concho, San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, Concho Valley Home for Girls and many other organizations. Eva was named San Angelo's Citizen of the Year in 1996. She died in 2007 at the age of 96. Her generous spirit continues to bless San Angelo.

Research on Eva's life comes from historian Suzanne Campbell. More details can be seen from the news article in the *San Angelo Standard-Times*, March 26, 2000.

Eva Camuñez, Senior photo, 1930 San Angelo High School,

Allen-Hartgrove House was built in 1909 and was originally located at 418 West Twohig. George Allen built the 14-room house. Oscar Ruffini was the designer and contractor. George established the first music store in San Angelo on April 1, 1890. The house was almost demolished in 1970s, but was moved to the ranch of Boze and Topsy Hartgrove. The Hartgroves donated the house to the Old Town Conservancy Inc in 1999.

Zenker House was built in 1900 by Charles W. Zenker (1858-1919). It is a Queen Anne Cottage Style home and was located at 412 Preusser. Mr. Zenker, a German immigrant, was a tailor for Fort Concho but later entered the liquor business. The Star Saloon was located at 206 S. Chadbourne. Queen Anne buildings have steep roofs, large dormers, asymmetrical front façade and expansive porches. A round or polygonal front corner tower is a distinctive feature.

Early Residence, late 1880s. This basic style house was typical of early day residences in San Angelo. As people became successful and earned enough money, a fancier home was built.

San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts Interested citizens created a fine arts museum in 1981 and the collection was housed in the Quartermaster Building at Fort Concho. The building you see today was built in 1999. The roof of the building is designed to resemble a saddle or covered wagon. Many local materials were used in its construction. In 2003 the Museum received the National Award for Museum Service from the Institute of Library Services and in 2011 received the Award of Excellence from the Texas Historical Commission. Please visit their website <http://samfa.org/> for additional information, exhibits and visiting hours.

Celebration Bridge

The bridge was completed in 1993 and messages in stone were purchased by local citizens. Ample seating exists along with games to play. Notice the bronze statue, “The Pearl of the Conchos” a sculpture by Jayne Charless Beck. The mermaid is offering a freshwater mussel which produces a lustrous pearl in many colors. Beatification of the river has been a goal of the city for many years. Enjoy the serenity and walk along the river.



Photo by Lisa Dennis Mahler

This completes the Fort Concho Historical Trail. We hope you have learned more about San Angelo.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following assisted Frank T. Hilton in 1981 providing information on San Angelo and Fort Concho in 1981: Gus Clemens, author of The Concho Country; Don Treadwell, Mrs. Donna Crisp, Mrs. Karen Anderson, E.R. Taylor; Fort Concho Museum Staffers, Wayne Darnel and Carol Schmidt; George Crownover; Bobby Eggemeyer; Wagon Yards, by C.T. Dalton; Old Angelo, by Joe Gibson; Texas Ranchman by John Loomis; Fort Concho: Its Why and Wherefore by J.N. Gregory; Ray Kadziora, original patch designer.

The current historical trail patch was designed in 2006 by Hugh Campbell of San Angelo. He is an artist that paints traditional West Texas ranch genre. He works in mediums of pastels, oils, and bronzes. Campbell's art has garnered many awards nationally.

This historical trail booklet was updated and expanded in 2023 by Lisa Dennis Mahler a great granddaughter of Tom Green County pioneers, Howard and Charlotte Parker Rowland, and JJ and Arminta DeLong Austin. They arrived in the late 1870s. Lisa's grandmother, Rose Rowland Austin wrote many newspaper and magazine articles about Fort Concho and San Angelo.

Lisa wishes to thank the staff at the West Texas Collection, Bob Bluthardt at Fort Concho, and Felton Cochran at the Cactus Bookstore for their assistance with this booklet's update.

READ MORE ABOUT IT

Fort Concho and the Texas Frontier by J. Evetts Haley

Old Angelo by Joe Gibson

Texas Ranchman: The Memoirs of John A. Loomis by John Loomis

The History of Tom Green County. Texas by Grace Bitner

The Concho Country by Gus Clemens

Tom Green County: Chronicles of Our Heritage, two volumes

Fort Concho in 1877 by Susan Miles

Visit the West Texas Collection located on the campus of Angelo State University, 2501 W. Ave. N, San Angelo, TX. You will find historical information about San Angelo and surrounding communities.
<https://www.angelo.edu/community/west-texas-collection/research/>

Mail order form for Fort Concho Historical Trail Patches

Scout office located at
104 Veterans Memorial Drive

Number of patches: _____
Patches are \$4.00 each. Add \$2.00 for mailing 1-4 patches; \$3.00 patches

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____
Phone: (_____) _____
Number of patches ____ X \$4.00 = ____ + postage _____
Total enclosed _____



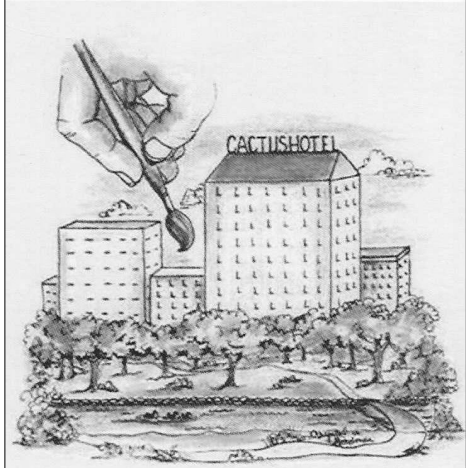
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Mail to: Texas Southwest Council, BSA
Attention: Fort Concho Historical Trail
PO Box 1584
San Angelo, TX 76902

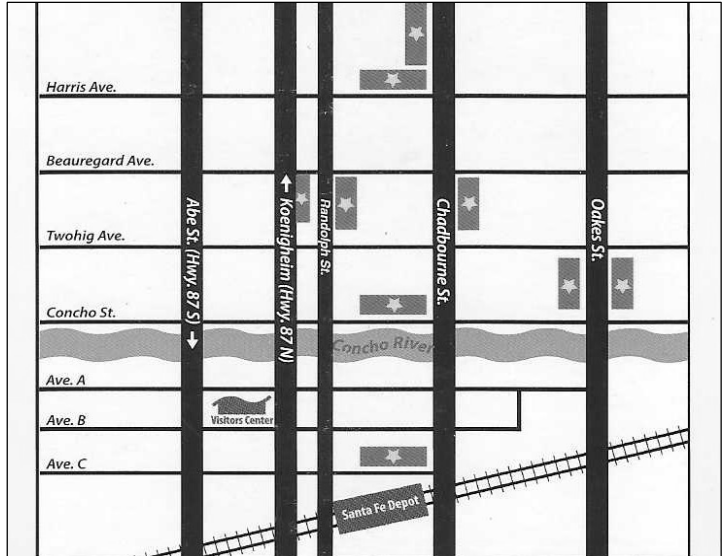


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- 4# **Santa Fe Depot**
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- 5# **The Iron Horse Steam Engine**
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- 6# **The Cromwell Airline**
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- 7# **Household Furniture Building**
At N. Chadbourne & Harris
- 8# **San Angelo Visitor Center**
418 W. Avenue B
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• San Angelo Army Air Base 12# • Goodfellow Airbase 13#
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