

The Concho Mail Station (41TG427)

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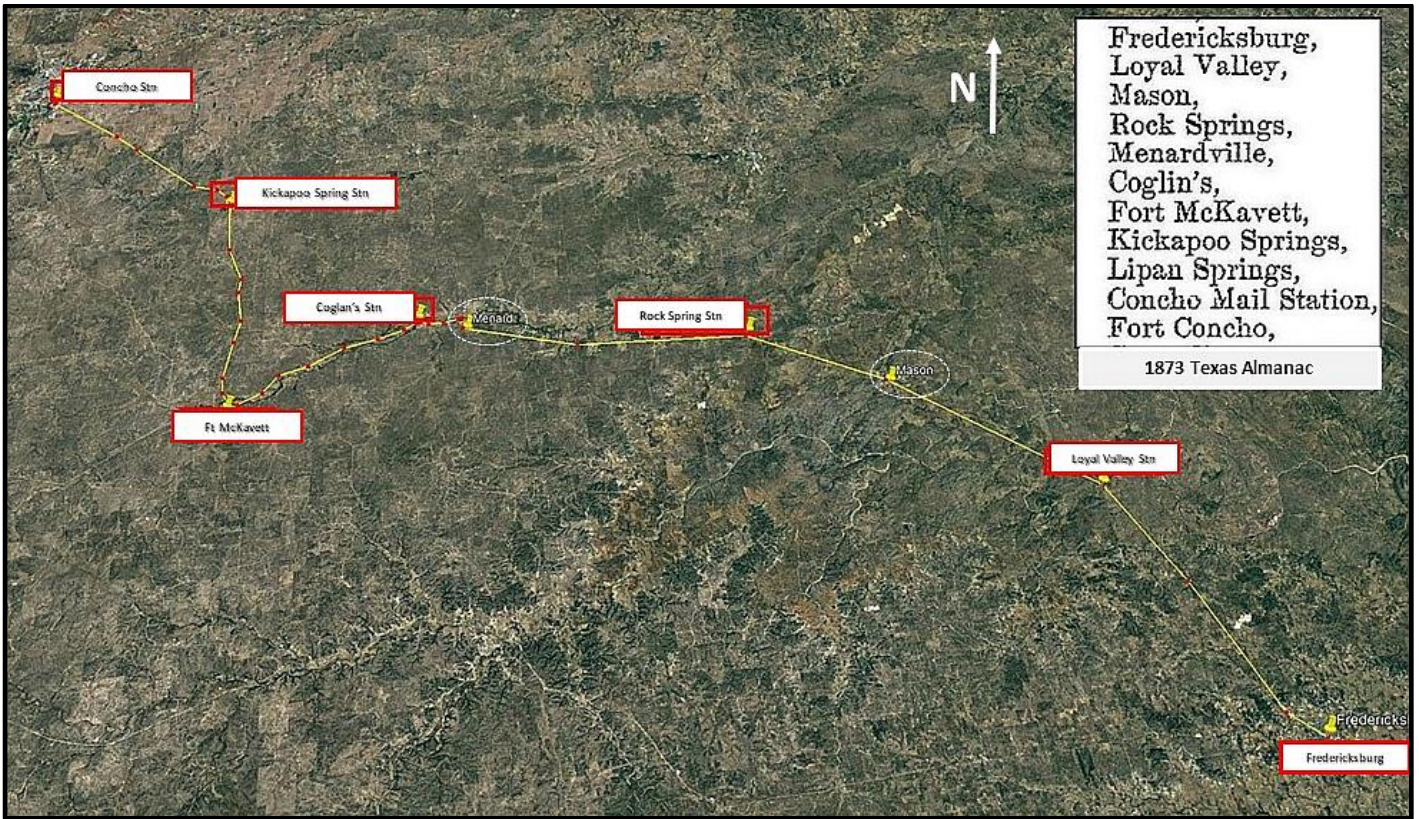
2023 updated 2025



History

The Concho Mail Station was the headquarters of the Concho Division of the 'San Antonio to El Paso Stage Line.' The stage line was nicknamed the Ben Ficklin Stage Line after the primary owner and founder of the line, Benjamin Ficklin. It was located three miles south of Fort Concho, San Angelo, Texas. Although the mail line began service through Fort Concho to El Paso in March of 1868, the station was not founded until around January 1869 when Ben Ficklin bought 640 acres along the Concho River. (Barton) Although we are not sure exactly when the critical infrastructure was completed, we can assume it was mid to late 1869. The station ended in 1882 when a great flood swept through the area of the mail station and the nearby town of Ben Ficklin, wiping both off the map. At the time of the flood, the town of Ben Ficklin had about 600 residents and a new \$18,000 courthouse. There were at least 65 deaths, and a majority of the town's structures were swept away, effectively ending the town. (Edgin)

The mail station site, including a military camp, covers an area of about three acres just south of the Concho River. Stagecoaches ran three times per week between San Antonio and Concho Mail Station/Fort Concho. They ran two times per week from the Concho Mail Station/Fort Concho and El Paso, via Fort Stockton. (See Appendix A) Later, they increased this section to three times per week. A second line from this station ran from the Concho Mail Station/Fort Concho to Fort Smith, Arkansas, using the old Butterfield Route. (Allen, Appendix D)



Route from San Antonio To Fort Concho



Route from Fort Concho To Fort Stockton during various periods

The Concho Mail Station was the division headquarters, requiring a significant number of support people and structures. In the 1870 census, there were 31 people listed as workers. (See Appendix B) In addition to two corrals, there was a blacksmith shop, wheelwright and paint shops, a harness storage and maintenance building, sheds for coaches, a commissary, a mess hall, and multiple picket houses for the employees. The manager and later owner's residence (Francis C. Taylor) was constructed of stone quarried nearby. The station itself was an adobe type structure. (Green)

An inventory taken at the Concho Mail Station in 1876 included eight teams of four horses, eight teams of four mules, three teams of two horses, and four teams of two mules. For coaches, there were three nine-passenger coaches, three six-passenger coaches, three four-passenger coaches, and two horse hacks. (Barton, Clemens)

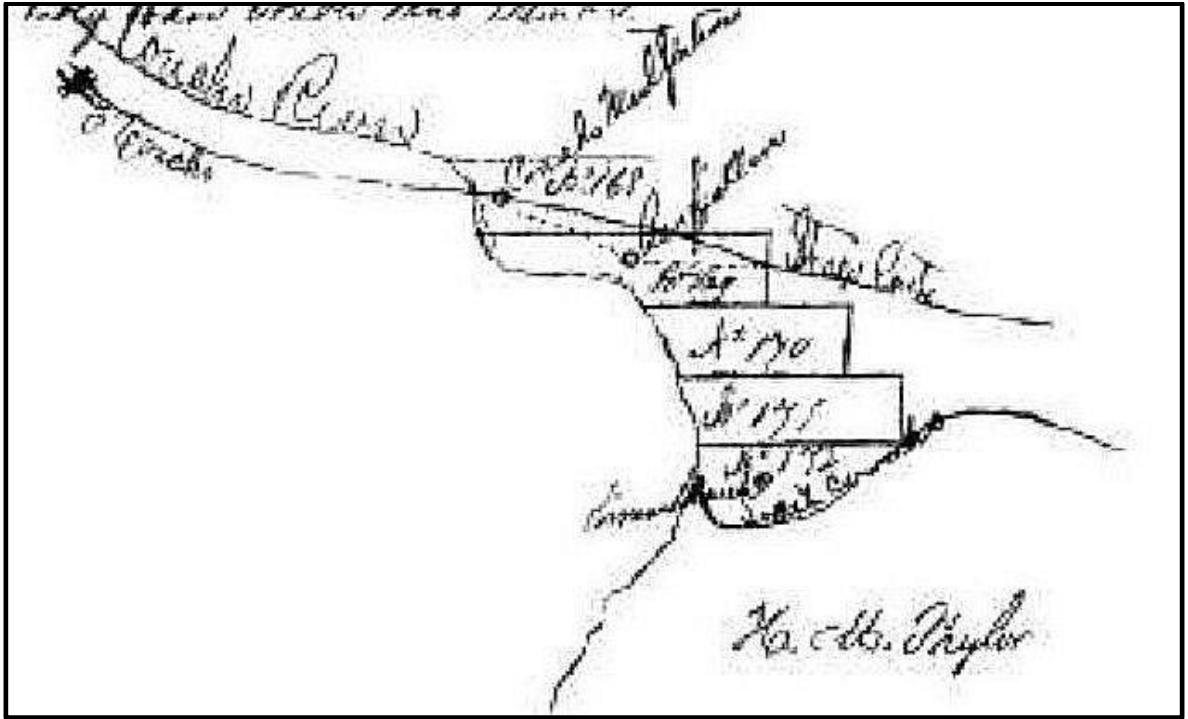
Satellite Imagery Analysis, Research, Site Reconnaissance

Although the satellite imagery analysis of the roads leading to the station is the most significant detail in determining the exact location, we also used documentation to validate this location. The first document is a historic hand-drawn map of the station and its relation to the river (Clemens). This map matches the analysis location.



Comparison of hand-drawn map and current location through satellite imagery analysis (Google Earth)

Additionally, a hand-drawn map by F.C. Taylor shows the road leading to the station as well as the road from the station to the town of Ben Ficklin, matching the roads seen in the imagery.



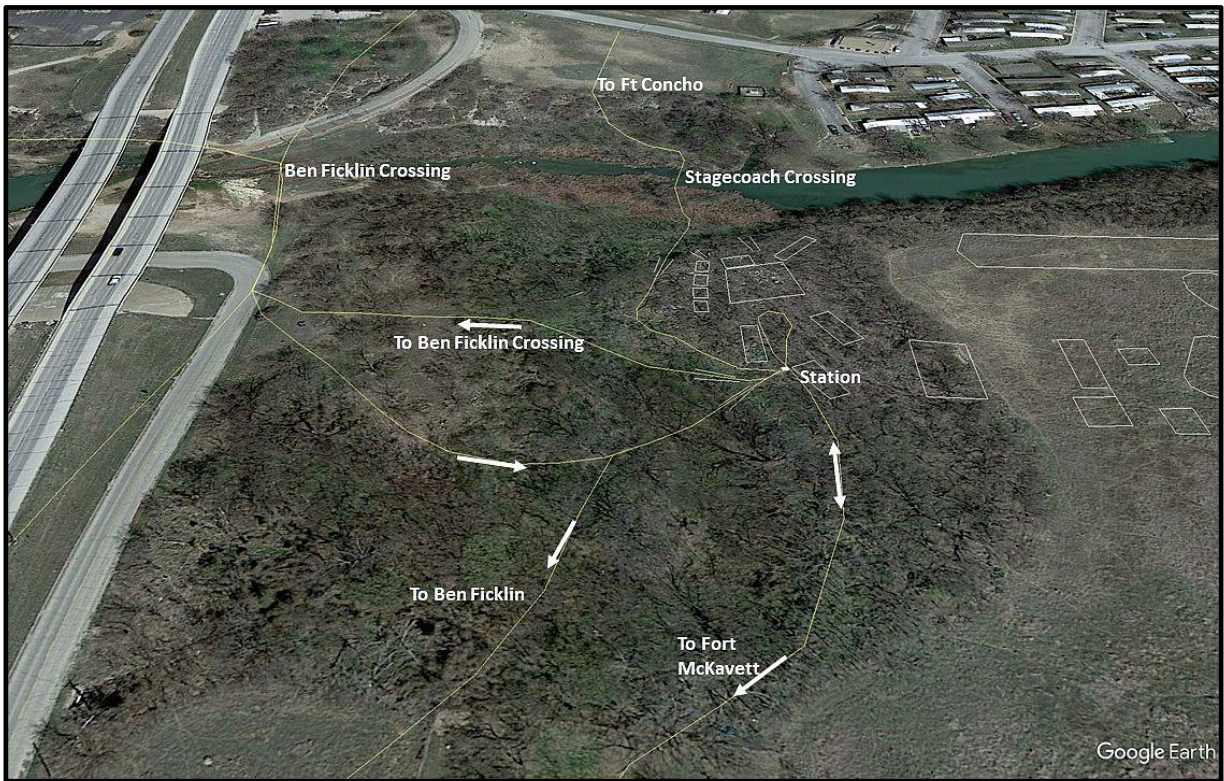
A hand-drawn map by F.C. Taylor of the proposed town of Ben Ficklin, with Mail Station and roads.

The stagecoach coming from Fort McKavett up to the Concho Mail Station from the south first entered a tree-lined road which remains essentially intact today, acting as a border between the current highway and the adjacent agricultural field.



Tree-lined stagecoach road coming from the south (Google Earth)

As it approached the station from the south the primary road went around a wide, shallow draw. For the road to Fort Concho, a crossing was built especially for the stagecoach. Large flat rocks were placed to make a in-water bridge. The swale of the road goes to a cut bank and down to the flat, across an old island, then across the man-made crossing.

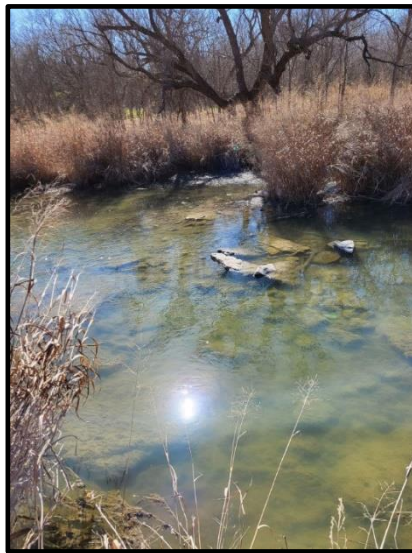


Roads To Concho Mail Station (Google Earth)



Color-enhanced satellite image of crossing point

The station sat on the western edge of an area of flat, level ground. Within 30 feet to the west of the stage station building is a 60-foot wide, 10-foot deep draw. This draw continues around the compound, encircling the entire stage station site, and merges with a drop-off on the north side facing the river. This stage station area was probably chosen for two reasons: 1) its proximity to a spring about a quarter mile away and 2) its proximity to a shallow rocky crossing area north of the site to get to Fort Concho, three miles north. All structures are now long gone, having been chiefly wood and adobe structures and swept away by the 1882 flood. It is now overgrown with Prickly Pear Cactus and Mesquite. **(See Appendix C for a newspaper account of the flood at the Mail Station)**



Stagecoach Crossing Below Station (Note: all flat rocks)

This wagon trail down to and across the river made for a much easier slope for the passengers than would have been by using the other cut banks to the Ben Ficklin low-water crossing. It's also likely they had a smoother crossing since flat rocks were placed, making a smooth, in-water bridge. The crossing measures 10 feet all the way across, and a trace can be seen moving up the slope on the other side and heading north to the fort.



Former Concho Mail Station Site

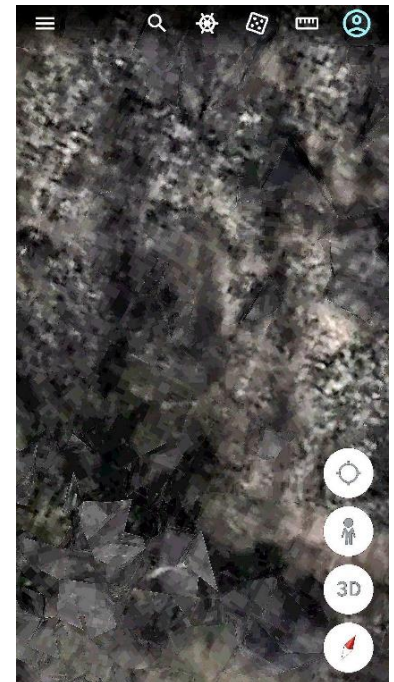
The first stop was the mail station, where passengers and mail were delivered before heading to the staging corral area to change out the mule or horse team. The stop was at the northeastern corner of the building, as seen in the (circa) 1870 photo soon after the structure was built. This is also where the coach road trace leads. A faint trace of the station building is visible from overhead 3D Google Earth imagery.



Concho Mail Station, circa 1870 (Fort Concho National Historic Landmark)

A probable 50 X 50 foot staging corral was built just north of the station building. A secondary road leads from the corral area to the former town of Ben Ficklin, a mile south along the Middle Concho River. A coach turnaround trace is directly in front of the staging corral, where the teams would have been changed out before returning to the station passenger point. All the stagecoach wagon roads lead to the same location – the northwest corner of the stage building - and then to the corral with a turnaround loop, validating the station building location. A third road leads from the staging corral area to the former town of Ben Ficklin.

According to historical documentation, the corral was initially built with eight-foot-high walls and divided into two equal sections. Between these was an open court area. Heavy posts were set inside the corral with a heavy chain strung through them. The chain hung at a height to prevent the stock animals from jumping over or getting under it. (Tom Green County Historical Preservation League) This open court would have been the team harnessing area.



Station Building Outline (Google Earth)

The 50 X 50 space with the divided central court area is too small for the number of horses and mules known to be at this station. This is why this had to be a staging corral used for just teams to be harnessed for the

current day's coaches. An additional nearby corral to the east was for all the other animals. The ground scaring shows a large corral out in the field to the east. It measures 85 feet long and 45 feet wide.

The eight-foot enclosure referenced cannot be seen in the (circa) 1878 photo below. It was most likely taken down since the Indian problems were considered over at that time. However, one eight-foot post can be seen in the photo and was probably from the original structure. We found another, hand-hewn post not far away.

In 1873, the new station owner, Francis Corbett Taylor, also purchased Bismark Farm, about three miles west along the South Concho River, where they kept some of their horses. (Lucky) This would be proper for animals that needed rest and recuperation before returning to work.



Stagecoach at Concho Mail Station circa 1878, colorized (Fort Concho National Historic Landmark)



Hand-Hewn Post, Probably From Original Corral

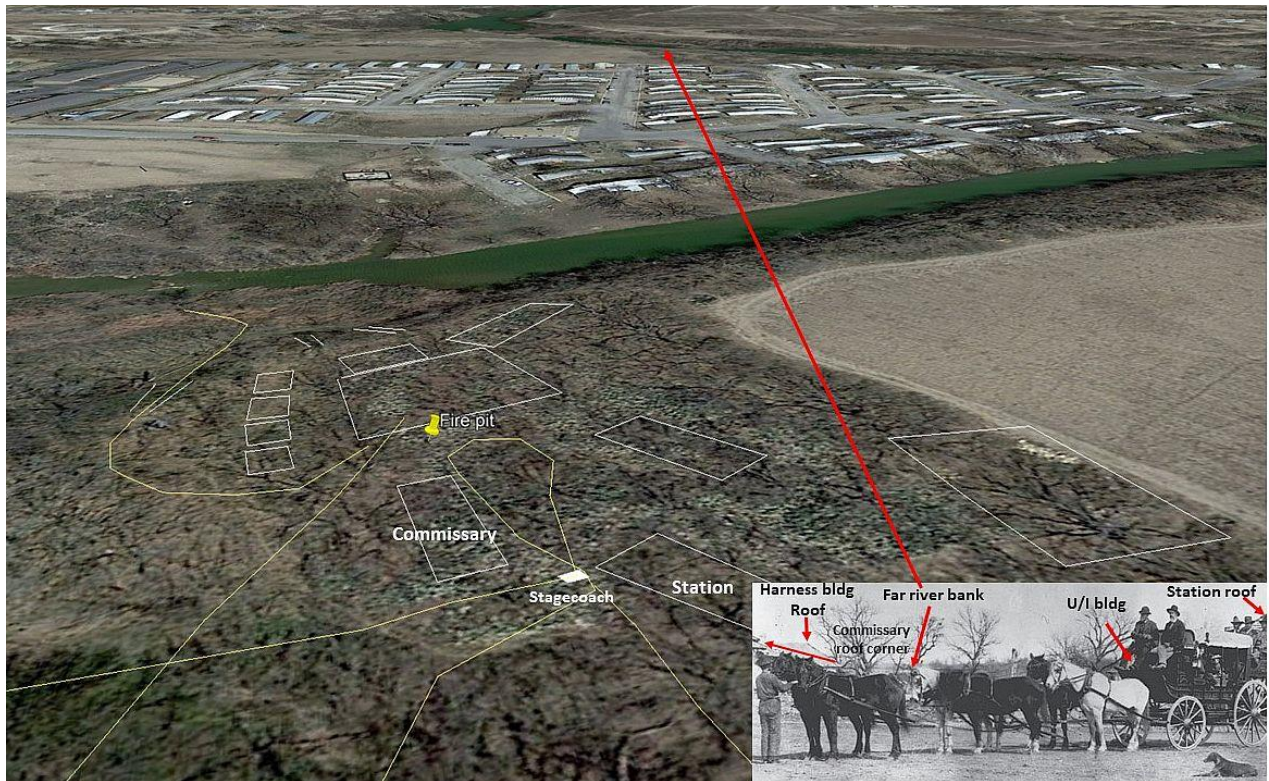
(Note that there is a similar post shown in the background of the 1879 photograph)

A second significant structure outline trace can be seen in imagery that measures 45 X 15 feet. This may be what was referred to as the commissary or mess hall. The corner of this building's roof can be seen in the (circa) 1878 photo. This was a significant building used to warehouse supplies for the entire Division's stage stations.



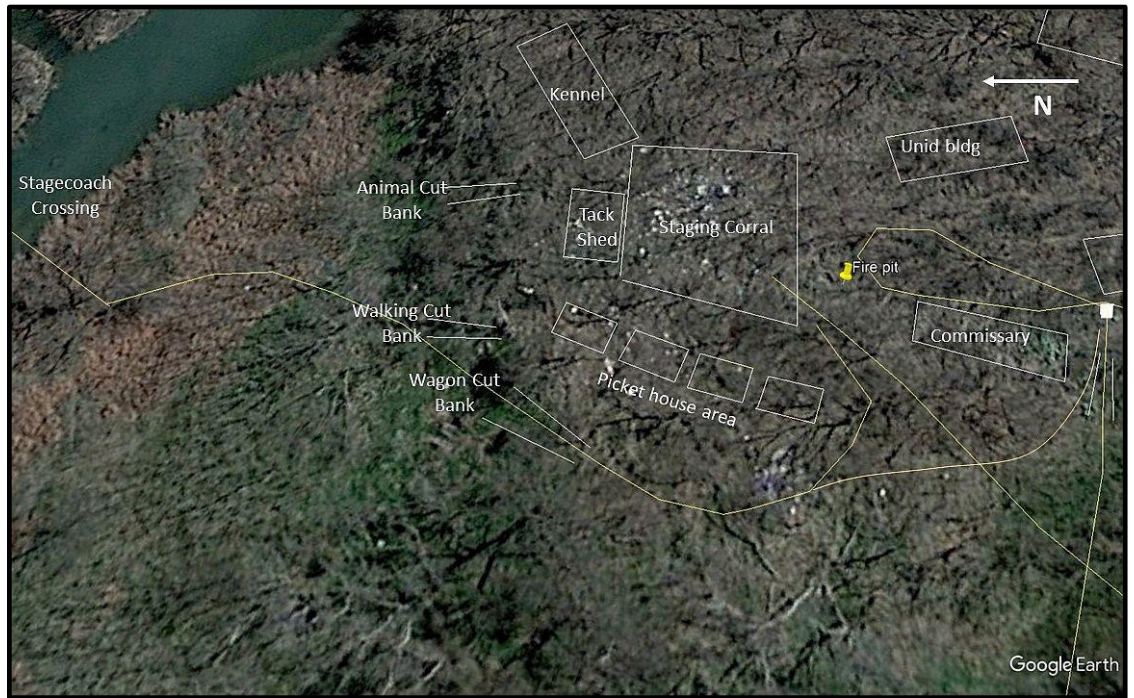
Rectangular structure across cattycorner to stage station, likely commissary (Google Earth)

By comparing the (circa) 1878 photograph with the proposed analysis of the station layout, we can find five points that match. Those are the corner of the probable commissary roof over the team holder's head, the far riverbank in the distance, the harness tack building roof above the lead horses, the roof of the station behind the three passengers in the coach boot seat, and the roof outline of an unidentified building between the driver's legs. This is the most substantial piece of evidence for the correct site location and layout.



Comparison Of Five Points (Google Earth)

Although there is no trace of the reported worker's picket buildings, they were purported to be close to the corral and were likely lined along the edge of the drop-off area, in a line to the west of the staging corral. A



period trash dump was discovered behind this area in the flat by metal detectors in 2015, supporting this. Behind the corral was the tack shed, and to the back eastern side was Ben Ficklin's 50-foot racing dog kennel. (Barton)

F.C. Taylor built for his family a substantial stone home behind the station. According to the documentation, a comfortable manager's dwelling was constructed of stone quarried nearby and constantly received visits from travelers. The quarry area is less than a quarter mile across the field to the east. The home had numerous rooms and was well furnished for the times. A fine square piano graced the parlor which had a Brussels carpet on the floor. The Taylor's library contained many interesting volumes freely loaned to friends. (Tom Green County Historical Preservation League)

Many of the stones were removed and re-purposed in later years after the home collapsed. One feature of probable repurposing is a small runoff water-blocking dam at the end of the draw below the station. However, we did find three corner areas of the building's foundation stones. It is located 20 yards east of the stage station. The measurements indicate it was 70 X 40 feet.



Stone Building – F.C. Taylor Home (Google Earth)



Re-purposed Building Stones For Dam



Stone Foundation Grouping



Stone Foundation Grouping



Piled Stones From Former Home

Most above-ground structures were wiped clean from this site in the 1882 flood. However, there is one probably related feature remaining, which is located between the corral and the probable commissary. There is a square dug pit that measures 3 X 3 feet with a two-foot slope leading into it. The area is surrounded by fire-heated limestone, with some still in the pit walls. Very close by was a small, severely deformed shovel head. This feature was most likely a fire pit for a communal earth oven commonly called a 'rocket stove.' The shovel was probably used to remove burned-up wood charcoal, which would have severely compromised the metal over time.



Fire Pit



Severely heat-deformed shovel and solder top cans

The rocket stove is a particular cooking and heating stove type wherein a clean, high-temperature burn is achieved. Moreover, the design includes separate chambers for fuel feeding and air channeling. This optimized configuration offers efficiencies in material/fuel usage and a dramatic reduction of soot by-products. As the name implies, the rocket stove, through increased oxidation, creates a hotter, faster flow of combustion, resulting in a rocket-like column of fire. The rocket stove is not a particular identifying model; rather, it is a set of design principles used in construction. The rocket stove can be constructed from a multitude of materials. The combustion chamber is a tall and narrow chimney column. Secondly, the chamber for placing material into the fire is placed in a low, horizontal position, similar to a traditional pizza oven. Thirdly, the air inlet runs in parallel with the material feeding chamber, allowing a steady supply of low-turbulence air to be drawn in just below the burning material. The efficiency comes from this constant influx of oxygen that allows for more intense combustion. The intense combustion effect enables users to burn less wood and debris. Moreover, the way in which material is loaded allows for a very controlled burn. Quite simply, one pushing sticks into the column of fire little by little. (Smale)



Primitive Adobe Rocket Stove (example)

As important as the road structure is to this site, the cut banks in the embankments on the side of the hill are to the roads and trails. The cut banks were dug into the hills' sides to lessen the slopes' steepness. Three cut banks were found for wagons, one for walking, and one for animals. These cut banks help to reveal the logic of the layout of the overall facility. Two cut banks are on the hill's west side, leading to the stage station and/or the corral. These are the two leading to and coming from the well-known Ben Ficklin low-water crossing. This crossing point is now just below the Bryant Road river crossing. The departure cut bank is at an angle to the hill. This would have been to lessen the danger of going downhill in a wagon. Another cut bank sits just south of the first and was probably for those heading to the town of Ben Ficklin.

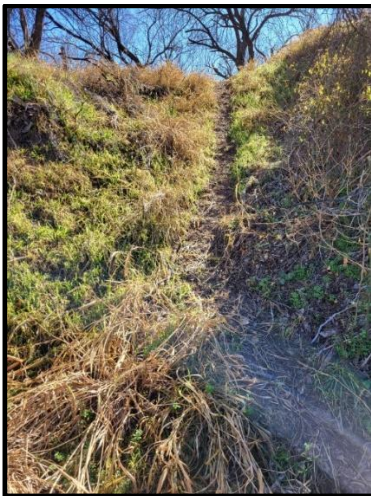


Looking Down Wagon Cut Bank (to Ben Ficklin low water crossing)

The remaining cut banks are on the north side of the compound, heading down to the flat and onto the river. The trail continued to a former island and then across the river. One cut bank was for the stagecoach. The wagon trace swale comes down from both the corral and station, winds around the middle of the hillside, just below the compound, then down the cut and onto the crossing. One narrow cut is behind the workers' residences, and it was probably just for walking. The area at the bottom of this cut is also where a period trash dump was previously found by metal detectors some years ago. A third cut, slightly wider than the narrow one, comes from the back of the corral and was probably for leading horses and mules down to a grazing area on the lower flat where the grass grows thicker due to the water table.



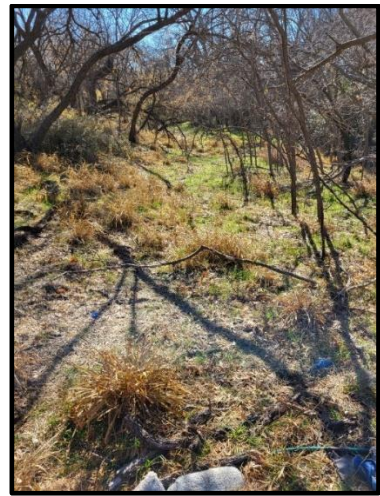
Cut Banks (Google Earth)



Walking Cut Bank



Wagon Cut Bank To Stage Crossing



Wagon Swale Around Hill

Military Detachment

Military reports show that the 24th Infantry Regiment was responsible for mail stations throughout West Texas and was headquartered out of Fort McKavett. The infantry from Fort McKavett was assigned the duties of protecting the station and stagecoaches, even when deployed to other forts. Fort Concho was designated for the area to Fort Stockton to the west and to the north on the old Butterfield road. In the early 1870s, it appears Fort McKavett was responsible for the road south and up to the Concho Mail Station. Cavalry and infantry were detached to the camp next to the station and they would ride escort between the

Concho' were used when referring to infantry guards and 'Taylor's Ranch' (i.e. F.C. Taylor) was used when referring to cavalry escort duties.

Notably, Ben Ficklin died from a medical emergency on March 10 1971 while in Washington D.C. F.C. Taylor was from that point on in charge of the mail operation. After Ficklin's death, the contract for this service was awarded to Ficklin's partner, F. P. Sawyer, with F.C. Taylor managing the operation. Sawyer operated the line through June 1875. (Stever)

From the number of military artifacts found in a very specific area by the metal detector group, we estimate the area of the military camp covered around 250 X 100 feet along the river east of the station compound. As stated earlier, the artifacts also indicate both infantry and cavalry were assigned to this detachment. The standard military detachment of this type would be infantry guarding the camp and corral, with both cavalry and infantry performing the escort duties.

In analyzing the area identified by the metal detector group on Google Earth there also appears to be ground scarring that matches the area described. Additionally, it appears to be a small circle that is still visible in 2021 imagery and sits in the center of this area. This was probably a flagpole location.

The agricultural ground was left fallow from 2015 to 2022 and the vegetation began growing back naturally, which usually will display outlines of long-term occupation of facilities, whether it be buildings or tents. In this case, the 2021 imagery does show perfect rectangles in rows on each side of the flagpole area. The east side tents measure out to 9 X 6 A-Frame tents and on the west side is two rows of 6 X 6 A-Frame tents.

There are only six of the larger tents which are directly in front of the corral area. This is an indication these were cavalry tents. Note there is also a trail (light-colored area) going from this area over to the stage station area. One military account from 1869 shows a mail coach escort (unrelated to this particular road section) consisting of five soldiers of the 9th Cavalry Regiment who defeated an attempt on the coach by 20 Indians. (Hutcheson) Smaller escorts could be used, depending on the perceived threat.

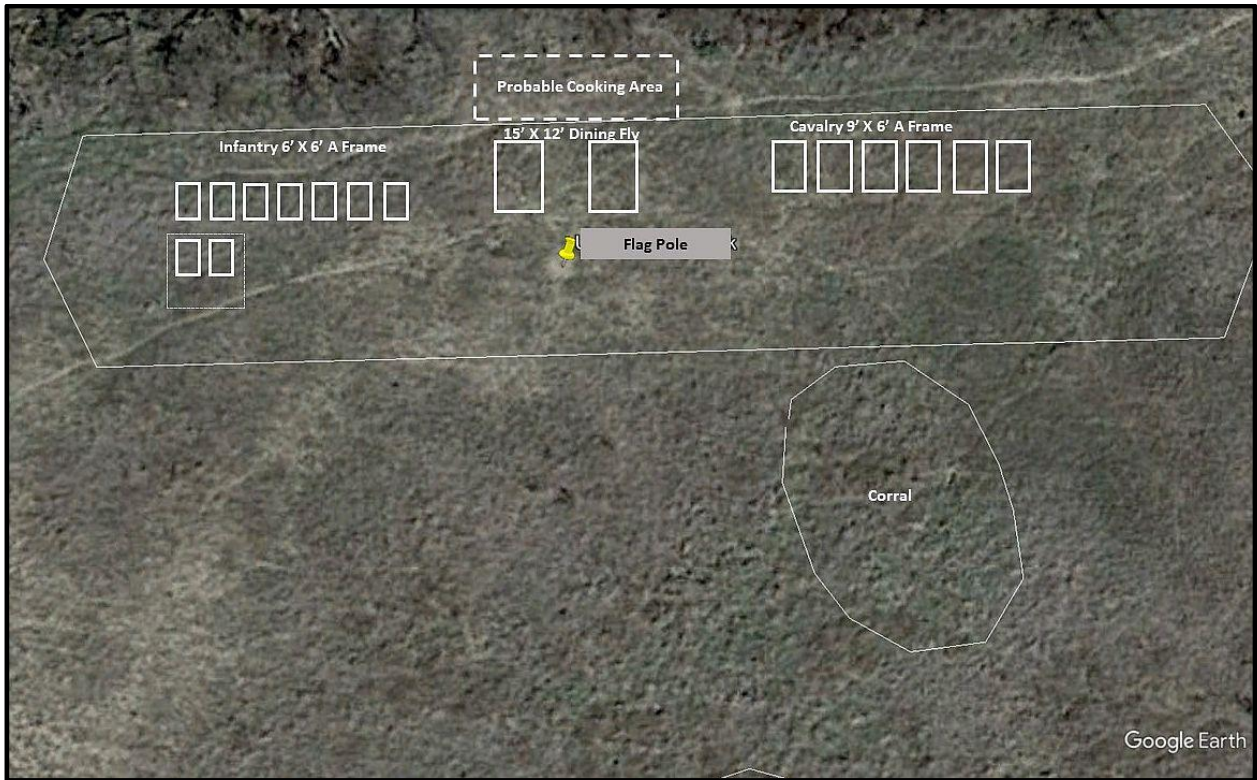


Military Camp In Relation To Station (Google Earth)

There appear to be nine smaller 6 X 6 tent traces on the west side. These were probably infantry. Two of these appear to be within a 15 X 15 tent fly. This would logically be the sergeant and corporal tents. Walking trails can be seen leading away from these two areas on each side of the camp. Two large rectangles in the center and on each side of the flagpole are 15 X 12, indicating these were open-air dining fly tents. A corral was directly adjacent to the military camp area. Military horses were never allowed to be mixed with civilian horses. Thus, the corral had to be separate from the mail station corral. And this is what the ground scaring shows.

There is no official documentation of when the military camp at Concho Mail Station was abandoned. Twenty-fourth Infantry units detached to Fort Concho appeared to be responsible for the camp in at least October of 1871. The 24th Infantry moved out of Fort McKavett in 1872 and there were no further reports of mail protection activities in the post monthly reports. In January of 1873 equine influenza swept through the horses and mules in the state of Texas and the stagecoach business stopped. It did not resume until the spring of 1873. (Barton) The military undoubtedly abandoned the camp at Concho Mail Station at this time and monthly reports reflect this. Although there were still problems up north and west through 1874, this area appeared to not be considered vulnerable. By the end of 1875, most of the Indian threat on the Edwards Plateau was over due to the outcome of the Red River War. (Cruse) It is not a definitive time period indicator, but, interestingly, the military-contracted Scovill Manufacturing Company stopped making the

design of buttons found at this site in 1875. Additionally, the latest definitive government cartridge in the collection was manufactured in 1873.



Probable Military Camp Layout (based on ground scaring and cluster area of military artifacts)

Stage Station Workshops

South of the military area can be seen ground scaring in imagery for the main station corral and small buildings. The corral measures 85 X 45 feet. Note in the image below the vegetation is greener in the corral area due to bioturbation from animal waste. The building closest to the corral would have been the blacksmith. The area outside this building is also greener, probably because of shoeing operations here. This is also the area where the metal-detecting group found most of the blacksmithing and harness-making artifacts. The wheelwright would have been close to coach sheds which is the long building in the image.



Blacksmithing items from field by metal detecting group (Horseshoe trimmings, square nails, cut nut & bolt)



Military Camp Area, Corrals, And Workshops (Google Earth)

In the image below a trail trace is visible leading from the main stage station corral to the staging corral. This supports the location and outline of the corral in this field. The corral location helps support the placement of the various buildings that would have been close by workshops. It also supports the existence and reasoning of a smaller staging corral.



Horse/Mule Trail Leading From Main Corral To Staging Corral

Artifacts

In 2015 a metal detecting club was permitted by the land lessee to metal detect the area around the fields and brush at this location. They worked weekends for approximately six months. Most artifacts were found in the adjacent plowed field to the east of the station. The massive flood in 1882 came downriver from the west, slamming into the station and spreading everything downriver to the east. Many artifacts were found buried in the field and a few are still in the brush around the station site. They came up with a plethora of artifacts. Many of the artifacts were identified and framed in multiple display frames. Given the meticulous nature of the collection, these artifacts can be tied directly to the station and military detachment camped near the station.

For these reasons, we believe these are proper period and locational artifacts. In most cases, specific locations of the dug items would not help with identifying site facilities due to the 1882 flood pushing everything east and mixing it all up in the fields as they settled. However, there were a few areas where similar items were grouped enough to estimate specific areas, these being the military area and probable workshops such as the blacksmith, harness maker, etc. The other artifacts, although not able to be tied to a particular site feature or activity, still give a good historical understanding of the lengthy occupation by what was essentially a tiny community of civilian workers, passengers, and military.

With that, we will present and explain some of these extraordinary artifacts in these displays.





As indicated by the drawing, this frame is mostly weapons and military related.

The left side cartridges are mostly military. The 45-70 and 50-70 were specifically military infantry. The 50-70 would have been right when station opened and as Fort Concho was just being built. The 45-75 was a civilian cartridge favored for big game like bison. The 56-56 was one of the first military cartridges for the

Spencer, which was essentially a cavalry rifle. However, the stage drivers were also outfitted with Spencer Carbines to protect their coaches. (Barton) Later modifications were the 56-50 and 56-52. The 45 Colt and 45 Schofield were military revolver cartridges, but also used by civilians. The 44 Winchester was one of the most popular of the civilian rifles. The revolver cartridges on the right side were all civilian.

Below the drawing is a military boot heel plate. Below that is a rifle stock strap (upside down). To the right is a harmonica reed, often found in camps of all types of the time, but quite often in military camps. The buttons above that are all Indian Wars enlisted buttons, with one metal undershirt button on top. The bottom two are coat cuff buttons. The shotgun shells are all civilian.





Top middle: lead with measuring cuts, probably for making lead balls.

Left of lead: toy gun cocking hammer and large cinch buckle

Center: thimble, probably for leather work. Below is probably lipstick case cover. Square nails on each side.

Rings are harness tack for horse and mules.

Top right: internal mechanism of clock

Bottom right: mule yoke hames

Bottom left to right: butter spreader, pocket knife, western saddle conchos

Within ring tack: Small lead balls for Cap & Ball pistols

Rivets on each side are for leatherwork, probably related to harness gear

Military buttons are Indian Wars design (enlisted), Mule harness hame

Bottom center is either a from a book binding or from furniture.

One of the most interesting items in this frame of artifacts is the leather-working thimble. This thimble is engraved with the letter 'L'. The 1870 census shows that the harness maker at the time was listed as 35-year-old John Lamb, originally from New York. This was very likely his engraved thimble. The 1880 census again shows Lamb as one of the few names that is still in the area other than the partner/owners. Based on number of the buildings he appears to have been living at the stage station in 1870, but probably in Ben Ficklin in 1880. The census also lists him as “deaf and dumb” or unable to speak. He was an excellent harness maker since he stayed on the job so long.



The fancy plate in this frame is a curiosity. It could be for a piece of furniture, but it also could be a fancy plate for an expensive book. These plates were common for expensive books and F.C. Taylor was known for having an extensive library in his home. A close inspection shows no drilled holes for attaching to furniture. An example of this type of plate on a book is below.



Artifact plate



Example book with plate



Top rows, left to right: Saddle D ring, 12 gauge shotgun shell, gunpowder flask top, boot heel metal plate, 45 cal cartridge, shot flask top handle, possible wagon rivet, unidentified brass seal, horseshoe nail, hand-forged horseshoe, leather strap buckle

Second row, left to right: lead bullets, harmonica reed, unidentified brass with drill hole

Left side, 50-70, 45 caliber, 56-50 caliber, 44 Henry, 45-70, 44 Winchester rim fire, 56-50

Middle, left to right: Large saddle or harness ring, strap buckle, unidentified, 44 caliber extra long

Bottom, left to right: leather rivets, saddle rings, Indian Wars buttons (enlisted), horseshoe nail, military band button. Bottom lead piece appears to have tooth marking on it. To right of that is possible bugle mouth piece.



Top, left to right: harmonica reeds, leather rivets, unidentified hinge latch, saddle conchos, pieces and key to possible trunk, bent horseshoe nail, unfinished/broken hand forged mule shoe

Middle, left to right: roller buckle for leather strap, possible decorative knob for dish cover, possible top of medicine or perfume bottle, unidentified button, medicine bottle neck

Bottom, left to right: connector pin, unidentified piece, suspenders brace (patent 4850), Penny Doll (Frozen Charlotte) head, possible suspenders brace, unidentified possible small wagon wheel iron tire piece, tack strap buckle

Bottom row: pennies, dimes, and nickel (identified in next page)



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| <p>Engines. Hot air engines—a perfect toy. Strong enough to run machinery. \$1.50 EASEL BLACK BOARD-</p> | <p>DOLLS. A most wonderful array of dolls. All kinds of Dolls imaginable, china dolls, cloth dolls, rubber dolls, unbreakable dolls, jointed dolls, big dolls, little dolls, penny dolls, 5 cent dolls, 10c dolls, 20c dolls, \$1.00 dolls, \$3.00 dolls, sleeping dolls, wide awake dolls, fancy dressed dolls, erving dolls, handsome dolls, homely dolls.</p> | <p>each, No Ad Has been ment to enun lines that make assortment. S we are able to assortment of— Novelti that was ever In Iron Toys, Toys, nothing from our pur- please or inter purchases cart and if you— Camd</p> |
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1857 Flying Eagle Cent



1859 Liberty Quarter



1866 Shield Nickel



Drilled Indian Head Penny

(Coins were drilled to sew into clothes linings for emergency money)



Back Side Of Indian Head Penny

Military Buttons

All military buttons are Indian Wars and enlisted. They are either general staff buttons or cavalry (identified with a C in the shield). General staff buttons were a catch-all for post-Civil War infantry. This is a sampling of the many military buttons found. The reason for so many buttons is likely due to the 1882 flood and the camp itself being inundated.





Miscellaneous Buttons



Other Military Items



Boot Heel Plates and Knapsack J-hooks, Bridle Rosette



Bugler Cap Insignia

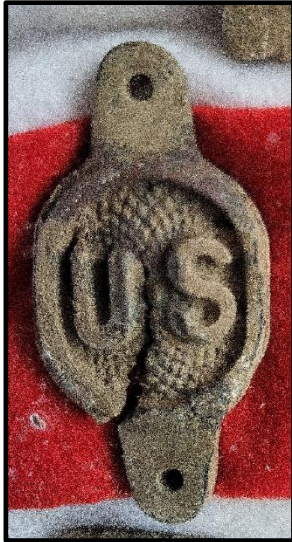
Medal plate

Jews Harp

(The Jew's harp, also known as jaw harp, vargan, mouth harp, gewgaw, guimbard, khomus, Ozark harp, Berimbau de boca, murchunga or mungiga, is a lamellophone instrument, consisting of a flexible metal or bamboo tongue or reed attached to a frame. Contrary to the name, the harp originated in Mongolia and has no relation to the Jewish people.)



Military Canteen



Bit Plate



(example)



Cartridge box plate



Example, cartridge box and plate

Miscellaneous Non-Military Artifacts



Pistol shot flask top (with example)



Coin Verification Scale Weight (2 Penny weight)



(example)

Verifying the correct weight of gold and silver coins is an age-old practice. The weighing was done on very precise scales, but until the beginning of the 18th century, it was possible to verify one ounce with maximum precision of only 0.1 grams. With an aim at improving the accuracy and sensitivity of the scales, their mass was lightened and the hinges were improved. Many new small scales were invented. In 1770, pocket scales were introduced. The scales were inside a box. Inside the box were small equal arm scales for weighing a small coin.

In 1817 with the introduction of the gold Sovereign the rocker balance was invented. These scales were balanced only if the weight of the coin was exact. It was also possible to verify the diameter and the thickness of a coin using these same scales. As of 1860, the minting of coins was much improved so that forging was nearly impossible. After a while, the merchants stopped using these types of scales, and shortly after, their production stopped completely.

https://www.gilai.com/article_21/Hanging-in-the-Balance---Antique-Scales

Conclusion

The Concho Mail Station was a significant part of the history of West Texas. It was not only the Division Headquarters, but it was the access point of all passengers and mail coming and going from both the northeastern and southeastern areas of Texas out into the unsettled lands and beyond. They overcame significant challenges and hardships to help expand into the area. Without this hub of transportation it is reasonable to say that San Angelo would have been much slower to grow into the county seat.

The compound itself was a community. In 1870 there were 34 civilians and 7 - 15 more soldiers living and working in this small 3-acre piece of land. From all accounts the business was well organized and for the most part, received praise from their passengers. It is also a sacred ground where at least six persons lost their lives during the 1882 flood. With such a significant contribution to not only the local area but all of West Texas, this site should be designated an historically significant site.



Overall Depiction Of Entire Site (Google Earth)

End Notes On Satellite Imagery Interpretation

Satellite and high-altitude aerial imagery interpretation has been a skill set taught in military intelligence since World War II. It only came available to the general public when Google Earth became available in the 1990s and has only been used in archeological studies for the past 15 – 20 years, most of that within the last 10 years. What cannot be seen on the ground can often be seen from high altitude when the ground surface has been heavily modified but then abandoned. Essentially, the surface retains the lines of man-made features, whether they be wagon roads, buildings, or even corrals and heavily used animal trails. The vegetation never grows back the same and tends to follow the shapes that were forced on it over long periods. Learning to understand how to properly interpret these changes takes many years of study of the imagery. To assist in the interpretation Google Earth allows for multiple years of imagery on the same location and can be manipulated to various altitudes and angles that make some features more visible using this manipulation. For verification, the interpreted features must be confirmed through a ground reconnaissance with identification and mapping artifacts to be sure that the feature being interpreted are correct.

Appendix A

The Texas Almanac for 1873, and Emigrant's Guide to Texas Page: 191

This [book](#) is part of the collection entitled: [Texas Almanac](#) and was provided to [The Portal to Texas History](#) by the [Texas State Historical Association](#).

EL PASO MAIL COMPANY'S LINES.

EL PASO DIVISION—F. C. TAYLOR, MANAGER.

1. Leave San Antonio for El Paso, via Leon Springs, Børne, Fredericksburg, Loyal Valley, Mason, Rock Spring, Menardville, Coglin's, McKavett, Kickapoo Springs, Lipan Springs, Concho Mail Station, Fort Concho, Centralia, Camp Melvin, Fort Stockton, Fort Davis, Fort Quitman, Toro, San Elizaria, and Ysleta, tri-weekly from San Antonio to Concho, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 8 A. M., and semi-weekly from Concho Mail Station to El Paso on Monday and Thursday, on arrival from San Antonio, and connecting at Concho with line to Jacksboro, via Camp Colorado, Fort Griffin and Fort Belknap, and on to Sherman.

2. Leave Austin for Fredericksburg, via Dripping Springs and Blanco, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6 P. M., connecting at Fredericksburg with main line to Concho and El Paso.

3. Leave San Antonio for Eagle Pass, via Castroville, Dhanis, Uvalde and Fort Clark, on Tuesday and Friday at 6 A. M.

Average rate of fare about twelve and a half cents per mile. Average rate of freight about eight cents per pound per hundred miles, currency, Passengers allowed sixty pounds of baggage free.

DISTANCES ON THE ABOVE LINES.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| From San Antonio to Leon Springs, | 19 miles. |
| Børne, | 30 miles. |
| Fredericksburg, | 70 miles. |
| Loyal Valley, | 95 miles. |
| Mason, | 115 miles. |
| Rock Springs, | 127 miles. |
| Menardville, | 155 miles. |
| Coglin's, | 161 miles. |
| Fort McKavett, | 177 miles. |
| Kickapoo Springs, | 202 miles. |
| Lipan Springs, | 212 miles. |
| Concho Mail Station, | 232 miles. |
| Fort Concho, | 235 miles. |
| Centralia, | 305 miles. |
| Camp Melvin, | 340 miles. |
| Fort Stockton, | 395 miles. |
| Fort Davis, | 475 miles. |
| Fort Quitman, | 609 miles. |
| Toro, | 649 miles. |
| San Elizario, | 678 miles. |
| Ysleta, | 684 miles. |
| El Paso, | 700 miles. |

(Note that Lipan Springs was not a station, but a well-known topographical location. Two known stations between Fort Concho and Centralia - Johnson and Head Of Concho - were also left out.)

Appendix B

12/22/22, 9:40 AM

1870 U

1870 U. S. Census for Bexar County, Texas

Inhabitants in: Concho Mail Station in the District of Bexar, State of Texas; Post Office: Fort Concho,
Texas

Date: 23 July 1870 Enumerator: Edward Donovan 1st Lt 2nd Infantry Page: 334

Transcribed by Cindy Koegel

| DW# | FM# | Name | Age | Sex | Race | Profession | Birthplace |
|-----|-----|---------------------|-----|-----|------|---------------------------|------------|
| 9 | 9 | Taylor, Francis C. | 47 | M | W | Sup H.S.? Mail Line | GA |
| | | Esther A. | 48 | F | W | Keeping House | SC |
| | | David, Charles | 45 | M | W | Agent for mail line | Canada |
| | | Morrill, Henry F. | 50 | M | W | Agent for mail line | NY |
| | | Spears, James D. | 25 | M | W | Agent for mail line | AL |
| 10 | | Evans, John P. | 33 | M | W | Clerk for mail line | SC |
| | | Hoffmaster, John | 40 | M | W | Stage Driver | KY |
| | | Harper, James | 26 | M | W | Stage Driver | OH |
| | | Brown, Timothy | 35 | M | W | Stage Driver | NY |
| | | Welch, John | 22 | M | W | Stage Driver | OH |
| | | Meisner?, Christian | 28 | M | W | Stage Driver | Prussia |
| | | Cane, Milton | 35 | M | W | Blacksmith | MO |
| | | Scott, John | 33 | M | W | Blacksmith | Scotland |
| | | Lackie, John | 25 | M | W | Painter | KY |
| 11 | | Lamb, John | 35 | M | W | Harness maker | NY |
| | | Walker, Joseph | 29 | M | W | House Carpenter | Ireland |
| | | Prainer?, Alfonso | 20 | M | W | Laborer | France |
| | | Bobo, John | 30 | M | W | Stage Driver | TN |
| | | Miner, James | 30 | M | W | Stage Driver | MO |
| | | Minass, Carrillo | 30 | M | W | Stock Feeder | Mexico |
| | | Gurney, William A. | 30 | M | W | Stock Feeder | England |
| | | Cook, John N. | 28 | M | W | Stock Feeder | IL |
| | | Randullo?, Manuel | 20 | M | W | Stock Feeder | Mexico |
| 12 | 10 | Anderson, Samuel | 35 | M | B | Watchman at Stage Station | TN |
| | | Johnson, Gilyand | 30 | M | B | Laborer | TX |
| | | Craig, William | 30 | M | M | Laborer | TX |
| | | Johnson, Perry | 35 | M | M | Teamster | TX |
| | | White, Willis | 35 | M | B | Teamster | TN |
| | | Nix, John | 35 | M | B | Teamster | TX |
| | | Jones, Thomas | 28 | M | B | Domestic Servant | VA |
| | | Suzan | 30 | F | M | Domestic Servant | VA |
| | | Martha | 4 | F | M | At Home | VA |
| | | Kitty | 1/2 | F | M | At Home | TX |
| 13 | 11 | Wallace, George | 30 | M | W | Station Keeper | Ireland |

[Back to Census](#)

[Back to Main Page](#)

Appendix C

The following is a transcription from the August 26, 1882 edition of the Tom Green Times newspaper published in San Angela, Texas. Our thanks to William Caskey and the Ben Ficklin Cemetery website, Metcalfe-Spence Cemetery Historical Preservation Foundation.

...At the Old Stage Station, between this town and Ben Ficklin. Unfortunately, this place is situated on a small eminence between the river and the cliffs, about 300 yards from the latter, whose base is skirted by a deep ravine. Escape from such a position is extremely difficult in any direction a horse would swim long before the house is endangered. Mrs. M. J. Metcalfe and her family of five, Mrs. Kate Arden and two of her children, Mr. B. Taylor and daughter, Mr. Frank Lerch, who was luckily absent, and Mr. S. C. Robertson and wife, of San Angela, reside at the station. Early in the morning they discovered that their houses were surrounded and water was making rapidly toward them. Mr. C. D. Foote appreciating the danger, drove from Ben Ficklin to the station, and brought off Mrs. Arden and her two children, Miss Taylor, Misses Fannie and Amelia Metcalfe, and the two sons of Sheriff Spears. Mrs. Metcalfe, thinking the water had reached its highest point, declined to leave, and her daughter, Miss Zemula, resolved to stay with her, saying: "My place is with mother." But the waters rising, induced Mr. Robertson to drive his wife to a place of safety, which he did with some difficulty. He then returned to aid Mrs. Metcalfe and others at the station, whom he induced to enter the hack. They started but the horses balked, and no progress was possible. At Mrs. Metcalfe's suggestion they turned, and by means of a ladder, climbed on the roof of her dwelling. In this position Mr. Terrell Harris and Kerby Smith, a colored man, who had nobly resolved to rescue the unfortunate party and had left Ben Ficklin in a frail boat for that purpose, observed and passed them. Upon that roof were Mrs. Metcalfe and her daughter Miss. Zemula; Mr. S. C. Robertson; Mr. Blake Taylor, Sr.; George Robinson, chainbearer for Mr. Leach; Anselmo, a Mexican; and Red Evans, a Negro cook. The heavy boat, half full of water, capsized within ten feet of the house. Its occupants, Harris and Smith, made desperately for a grove of pecan trees, a place on the tallest of which they luckily secured. Nearby at the same time the roof with its human freight broke in two, the ladies clinging to one half and the five men to the other part. The screams of George Robinson were distinctly heard and the actions of all seen by Harris and Smith from the tree tops. Mr. Taylor lost his hold on the roof in a few seconds and was swept beyond human aid. The ladies bore down upon the pecan clump and were engulfed

...Screaming as they disappeared beneath the drift which had rapidly accumulated within a few feet of Harris. Mr. S. C. Robertson was shaken from the roof, but caught a tree and held on through as terrible a day and night as anyone ever endured. Once the wreck of the house knocked him from his position, but he swam until he secured another. All of the party on the roof but this gentleman were lost. On Friday morning at about 6 o'clock, Judge Joseph Spence espied Mr. Robertson in his tree and took steps to rescue him. An hour later Captain Rose, U.S.A., found and relieved Harris and Smith. They were bruised and sore from contact with the drift and from their super-human exertions. The station itself an utter ruin. All the houses and walls have disappeared in a current before which stone walls melted like snow in June.

<https://www.benficklincemetery.org/august-24-1882>

Appendix D

- Ben Ficklin's original bid and contract (1867)
- Quarterly and annual contractor affidavits (1868–1871)
- Francis Taylor's continuation affidavits (1871–1882)
- Special Agent reports on the line (especially 1874 and 1878)

Stations Explicitly Named in Post-1866 Postal Records for the Ficklin Line

| Station Name | Location (modern reference) | First/Latest Postal Mention | Notes from Postal Records |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Fort Smith, Arkansas | Fort Smith, AR | 1867–1882 | Eastern terminus |
| Skullyville (Walker's Station area) | Near Spiro, OK | 1868–1876 | Choctaw Agency post office |
| Boggy Depot | Atoka County, OK | 1868–1882 | Major relay & post office |
| Nail's Station / Nail's Crossing | Bryan County, OK | 1869–1881 | On Kiamichi River |
| Red River Station (Colbert's Ferry) | Near Denison, TX / Colbert, OK | 1868–1882 | Texas border crossing |
| Sherman | Grayson County, TX | 1869–1882 | Post office & meal stop |
| Gainesville | Cooke County, TX | 1870–1882 | County seat stop |
| Jacksboro | Jack County, TX | 1870–1882 | Near Fort Richardson |
| Fort Belknap | Young County, TX | 1868–1878 | Military escort point |
| Fort Phantom Hill | Jones County, TX | 1869–1881 | Used ruins as station |
| Fort Chadbourne | Coke County, TX | 1868–1881 | Active relay until 1877 |
| Concho (Head of Concho / Concho P.O.) | Near San Angelo, Tom Green County, TX | 1870–1882 | Post office established 1870 |
| Fort Concho / Concho Mail Station | San Angelo, TX | 1868–1882 | Western division headquarters; frequently cited in contractor reports |

Key Points

- **Only the above 13 stations** appear by name in the actual post-1866 postal contract documents for the Ben Ficklin line.
- All other intermediate stations in my earlier list (Trahern's, Holloway's, Riddle's, Pusley's, Waddell's, Geary's, Diamond's, Davidson's, Connolly's, Franz's, Grape Creek, etc.) are **not mentioned by name** in surviving Post Office Department records for this specific contract. They are known only from Butterfield-era schedules, military correspondence, or diaries, or local tradition.
- The Post Office Department cared primarily about the **major relay points, post offices, and military**

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