Fort Concho

Less than fifty miles south of Fort Chadbourne is Fort Concho, located in San Angelo, Texas. The over 1600 acre site for Fort Concho was first selected in November 1867 and was necessary due to the lack of water at the older Fort Chadbourne. The 4th US Cavalry's Company H arrived to take up residence in December of 1867. First named Camp Hatch and then Camp Kelly, the post became permanently known as Fort Concho in honor of its location on the banks of the Concho River.

The storehouses, commissary and quartermaster, were constructed at the post in 1868. Construction continued until in 1879, approximately forty permanent limestone rock buildings were available to house and service the eight companies of soldiers who called Fort Concho home. This fort served as the regimental headquarters for both the 4th and 10th Cavalries and at its peak was home to 400-500 men - soldiers, both infantry and cavalry, officers and support personnel. Some of all four regiments of the Buffalo Soldiers were stationed here before the fort was closed in 1889.

Today, Fort Concho is owned by the City of San Angelo and includes over twenty original and restored buildings. It is open Monday through Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm and Sunday from 1 pm to 5 pm. Self-guided tours are available until 4:30 pm on each of these days. Guided tours are available Wednesday through Sunday.

Fort McKavett

Fort explorers only have about 65 miles to travel from Fort Concho to Fort McKavett. Leaving San Angelo heading south to Christoval and heading out onto Toenail Trail (FM 2084) and then turning east on 190, will bring you to old Fort McKavett. This US Army post began with five companies of the 8th US Infantry in 1852. Its purpose was to protect settlers and all who traveled on the Upper El Paso Road. Camp San Saba, as it was originally known, was changed to Fort McKavett in honor of Captain Henry McKavett. The fort was abandoned in 1859, reoccupied in 1868 and closed for good in 1883. Soldiers returning in 1868 found most of the original buildings destroyed and were forced to live in tents until new structures could be completed. It is said that General William T. Sherman called this fort "the prettiest post in Texas".

Fort McKavett is now a Texas State Historic Site and is open daily from 8 am to 5 pm.

Fort Mason

The last frontier fort we will visit on this southern route is Fort Mason, located on Spruce Street in Mason, Texas, just a little over 60 miles southeast of Fort McKavett.

Lt. Colonel William J. Hardee chose the site for this post established by Companies A and B of the 2nd US Dragoons on July 6, 1851, to protect settlers from the Indians. Once the fort was established, fewer Indian raids occurred and the fort was closed several times in its first decade. At one time in early 1856, 2nd US Cavalry Companies B, C, D, G, H and I all had their headquarters on this post. Of those stationed at Fort Mason prior to the Civil War, twenty went on to become generals. Eight of these became generals in the Union Army with twelve serving as generals for the Confederacy. Fort Mason was the last command for Robert E. Lee as a US officer.

Abandoned from 1861 to 1866, the fort was used briefly by the Confederate Army to house prisoners in 1862. In late 1866, the US Army returned to the fort and it was reoccupied, repaired and improved. By 1869, the fort had twenty-five buildings – most empty and needing repair and only 69 men stationed there at that time. It was ordered closed in March of that year. However in 1870, it was reopened to serve as the headquarters for the Frontier Forces Companies A and B. These forces were disbanded or moved in 1871 and the doors of Fort Mason were closed permanently.

Present day visitors to Fort Mason can view and explore a reproduction of the officers quarters at the Fort Mason Museum.