



# In Search of El dorado

A daily journal of my travels and adventures in my.....Search for Eldorado

Hello to Family & Friends

Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup> 2021 Day 55



I'm not sure what's with the wind this past week, but it woke me up a couple times again last night. I was supposed to hike and or bike in Seminole Canyon State Park today, but what fun is it to hike along a canyon in the fog if you can't see anything? Photos especially would be worthless. Battling the 30 mph wind on a bike did not sound like fun either, so I 'headed west old man' to Fort Stockton.

Actually it was northwest and the wind, for now, was partially pushing me along. I arrived and ate lunch before visiting the museum and walking the grounds. The VC used to be a barracks building.



**Colonel Edward Hatch** and the recently created **9th Cavalry** arrived at Comanche Springs in July 1867 and immediately went to work building a substantial post with numerous adobe structures and a stone guardhouse. It is this fort from the third period of military activity that visitors see today.



Does anyone know the smoke signal for AAA?



After years of patrol, scouts, and the final defeat of the Apaches in 1882, Fort Stockton had outlived its usefulness. On June 26, 1886 the last soldiers, one company of the **Third Cavalry** and two companies of the **Sixteenth Infantry**, marched away for the final time. However, as with most military installations, a substantial town grew up around the post. Initially relying on the fort for both protection and its economic livelihood, the town of **Fort Stockton** prospered on its own as the county seat of **Pecos County**.





The inside of an officer's tent from the 1870's.

Below – This is what a barracks looked like in the 1870's.



I expected the kitchen to be well stocked with the trappings of an 1870's kitchen, but it was empty.



## “OFFICER’S ROW”

Eight Officer Quarters were built on the west side of the Parade Ground, one of which burned in an evening fire in 1872. The quarters housed married officers and their families, as well as bachelor officers and married officers who were serving on the frontier "solo". It was unusual for an officer to occupy one entire building, and all officers were subject to being "turned out" at any time. This was a practice whereby if an officer arrived at the Fort who outranked the resident of the quarters, the new arrival had the option of claiming the lower-ranked officer's quarters. The only available recourse was to complain to the Commanding Officer; however, this was usually not done. Of the original eight, three remain, one of which is a private residence. This Indian Wars Fort was the first headquarters of the 9th Cavalry and was garrisoned primarily by white officers and black soldiers, who were given the name, "Buffalo Soldiers", by the Native Americans.



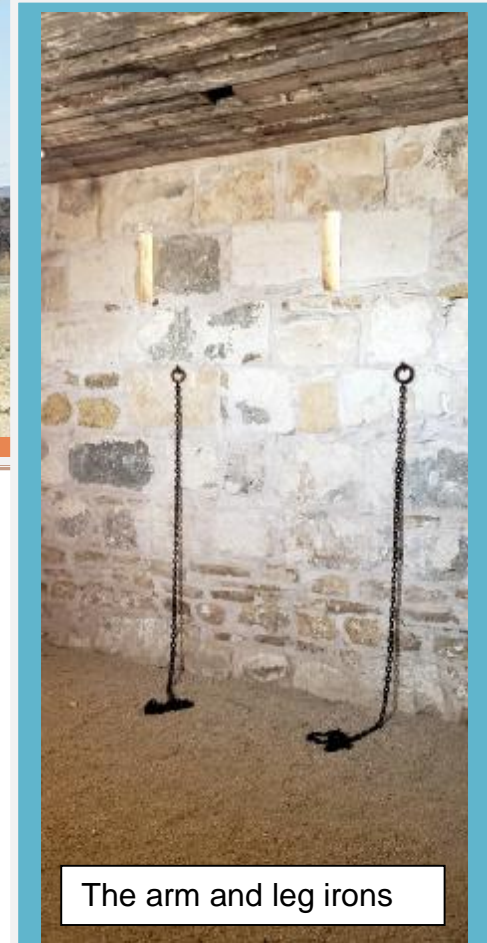
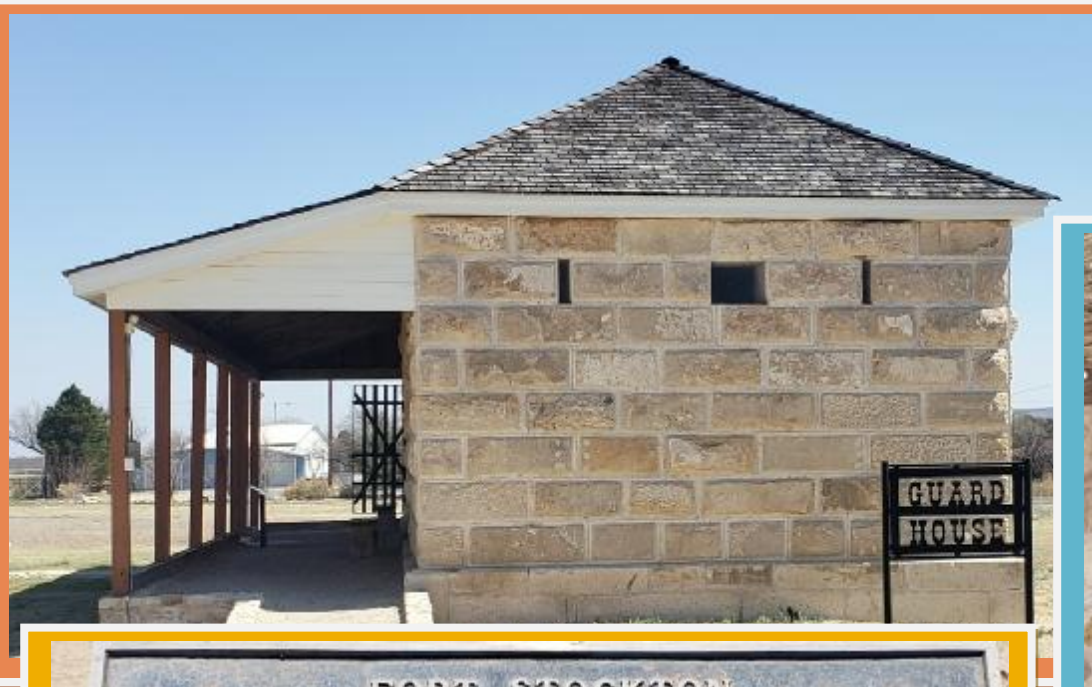
### FORT STOCKTON OFFICERS' QUARTERS

WHEN FORT STOCKTON WAS REBUILT IN 1867 TO PROTECT THE ROUTE TO EL PASO, SEVEN HOMES WERE ERECTED FOR OFFICERS' FAMILIES. BUILT WITH ROCK FOUNDATIONS AND THICK ADOBE WALLS, THE STRUCTURES FACED THE PARADE GROUND. NEARBY WERE LOCATED CORRALS, CARRIAGE STALLS, AND OTHER OUTBUILDINGS. THE HOUSES WERE USED BY OFFICERS' FAMILIES UNTIL THE FORT CLOSED IN 1886. THREE OF THE RESIDENCES REMAIN STANDING.

The one above looked the best, but it has been a private residence for quite some time and not dependent on government funds for upkeep.



This one was in the midst of being remodeled.



The arm and leg irons

FORT STOCKTON  
GUARD HOUSE  
FOUNDED IN 1859, FORT STOCKTON  
WAS ABANDONED DURING THE CIVIL  
WAR AND REESTABLISHED IN 1867,  
WHEN THIS GUARD HOUSE WAS BUILT.  
STONE FOR THE STRUCTURE WAS  
QUARRIED LOCALLY. THE LUMBER WAS  
HAULED FROM INDIANOLA BY OXCART.  
THE GUARD HOUSE CONSISTED OF A  
ROOM WITH ARM AND LEG IRONS, A  
DUNGEON FOR SOLITARY CONFINEMENT,  
AND QUARTERS FOR GUARDS. IT WAS  
ABANDONED IN 1886.  
RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK - 1966



Right is the solitary confinement cell. The plaque above states the lumber was hauled from Indianola by oxcart. You remember Indianola, right? A port on the Gulf coast that was a rival to Galveston until a couple hurricanes made it a ghost town? That's 464 miles, if you take I-10. It was probably 600 miles by oxcart. That trip probably took two months. It just goes to show you that there are no trees in Texas worthy of being used to build a house. I guess there are some things that are *not* bigger in Texas.



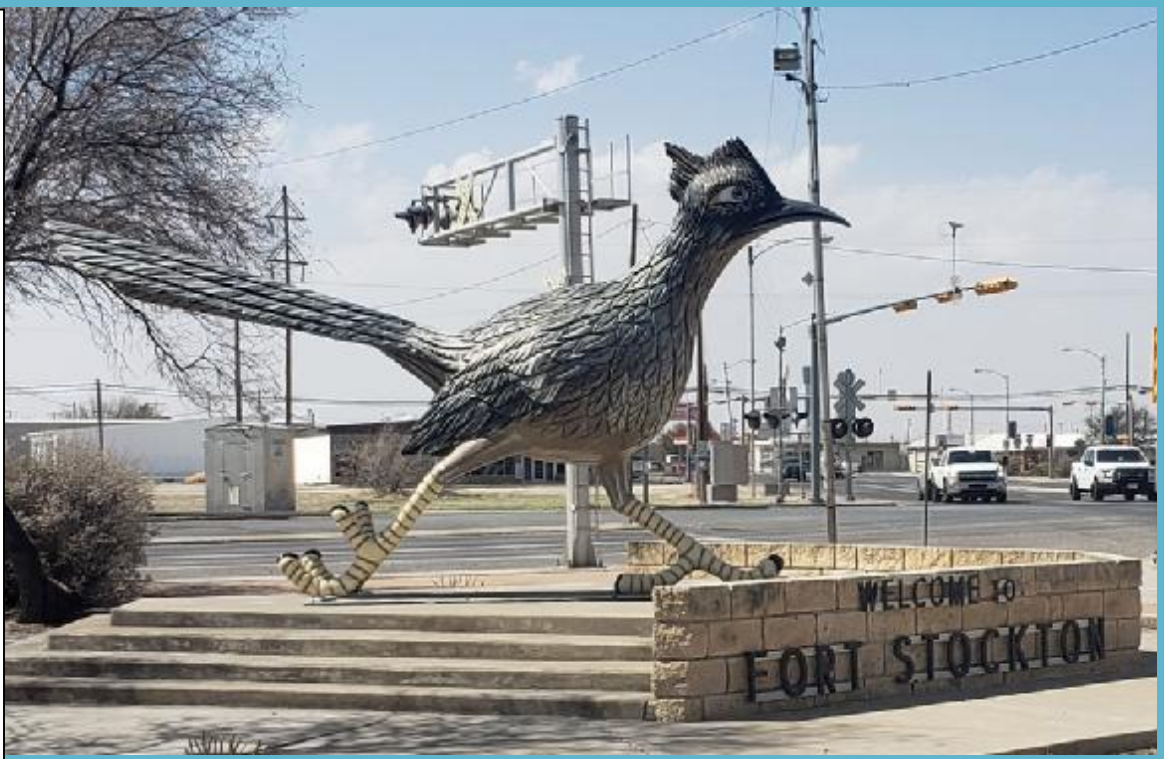
THIS WAGON WAS USED  
IN 2 JOHN WAYNE MOVIES  
"THE COMANCHEROS"  
"UNDEFEATED"



I don't know if it's true or not, but, well, there it is.



'Paisano Pete' stands 11 feet tall and 22 feet long and has been the official mascot of Fort Stockton since 1980. Purchased from a Wisconsin (yea) company, at that time Pete was the largest roadrunner in the world. Roadrunners are also very prevalent around Fort Stockton. Unfortunately, Pete only held the record until 1993 when Las Cruces, NM unveiled their version at almost twice the height and length. Paraphrased from Atlasobscura



The VC is in a refurbished train depot, closed, but they did have these cabooses sitting outside. There were several metal, not sure what to call them, I guess they might be sculptures, but it was a cowboy on a horse, a wagon, a family, etc., etc., basically the history of Texas. They also had the oil rig and plaque below.

## OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY IN PECOS COUNTY

LOCATED IN THE PETROLEUM-RICH PERMIAN BASIN, PECOS IS ONE OF THE MOST PROLIFIC OIL- AND GAS-PRODUCING COUNTIES IN TEXAS. THE PETROLEUM BUSINESS HERE BEGAN ABOUT 1900 WITH THE DRILLING OF THE TURNEY WELL NEAR AN ANCIENT "SEEP", A TRADITIONAL LOCAL SOURCE OF OIL FOR LUBRICATING AND MEDICINAL PURPOSES.



A SHORT-LIVED BOOM IN 1921 CAUSED BY THE DISCOVERY OF THE "MIRACLE WELL" HERALDED THE ARRIVAL OF THE FABULOUS YATES OIL FIELD (1926), INDICATING THE AREA'S GREAT POTENTIAL OIL WEALTH. SINCE THAT YEAR OVER 710 MILLION BARRELS OF OIL HAVE BEEN PRODUCED FROM THE YATES, FORT STOCKTON AND OTHER COUNTY FIELDS.

THE PRESENCE OF NATURAL GAS, KNOWN FOR YEARS, WAS SLOW TO BE EXPLOITED BECAUSE GAS WAS CONSIDERED AN UNDESIRABLE BY-PRODUCT OF THE OIL BUSINESS. THE FIRST COMMERCIAL USE OF GAS HERE WAS INSPIRED AFTER IT WAS FOUND BY WORKERS DRILLING A WATER WELL, IN 1925. THE DISCOVERY, ABOUT 1948, OF SANTA ROSA FIELD SPURRED EXPLORATION THAT BROUGHT IN THE PUCKETT FIELD IN 1952. SUBSEQUENT DEEP DRILLING TAPPED MANY EXTENSIVE POOLS, INCLUDING IN 1963 THE PROLIFIC GOMEZ FIELD, WHICH HAD PRODUCED OVER 478 BILLION CUBIC FEET OF GAS AS OF 1970. TODAY PETROLEUM IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ASSET OF PECOS COUNTY.

(1973)





I am getting frustrated with the wind and finding places to go in west Texas. There are no scenic backroads because there are no backroads at all, unless you own a ranch. So it's highways at 80 mph (I have the cruise set at 64) fighting the wind. The ESP, or 'electronic stability programme' (yes that's how they spell it in Europe), puts a message on the display that I need to visit a workshop. The EPS detects loss of traction in a wheel. In other words, as I mentioned the other day, the RV is being lifted enough by the wind to cause a loss of traction and trigger the sensor. After being turned off for awhile it went away, probably reset itself, but it is a battle to keep it between the lines. I can't just sit someplace until the winds die. There is a warning out for Sunday and Sunday night of 50-60 mph gusts. I don't need a crosswind to hit me from the side when I'm taking a curve at 64 mph. That would cause *me* to send up smoke signals to AAA. It was only about 2 p.m. and after checking out RoadsideAmerica, Atlasobscura and Allstays I decided to head southwest, right into the wind, to see some scary lights.



You will have to pardon the windshield reflection. I know, I know, I'm steering with my knee while taking pictures at 64 mph with 40 mph winds blowing me every which way (but loose). There is very little traffic on the road. This is just the winds whipping up the dust so high and thick that you can barely see the mountains. Yes, I am finally traveling through some decent scenery and it can't be seen.





# MARFA MYSTERY LIGHTS



The Marfa Mystery Lights are visible on many clear nights between Marfa and Paisano Pass as one looks towards the Chinati Mountains. The lights may appear in various colors as they move about, split apart, melt together, disappear and reappear.

Robert Reed Ellison, a young cowboy, reported sighting the lights in 1883. He spotted them while tending a herd of cattle and wondered if they were Apache Indian campfires.

Apache Indians believed these eerie lights to be stars dropping to the earth.

Many viewers have theories ranging from scientific to science fiction as they describe their ideas of aliens in UFO's, ranch house lights, St. Elmo's fire, or headlights from vehicles on US 67, the Presidio highway. Some believe the lights are an electrostatic discharge, swamp gases, moonlight shining on veins of mica, or ghosts of Conquistadors searching for gold.

An explanation as to why the lights cannot be located is an unusual phenomenon similar to a miracle, where atmospheric conditions produced by the interaction of cold and warm layers of air bend light so that it can be seen from afar, but not up close.

The mystery of these lights still remains unsolved.



Just east of Marfa, Texas is a rest area known as the viewing spot for the Marfa Mystery Lights. I was hoping to find a somewhat sheltered parking spot here, but no luck. I used the bathroom and ran into two couples who were on their first RV trip after being retired. The RV broke down and had to be towed a couple hundred miles and it will be three weeks before they can even take a look at what's wrong. I guess he did know the smoke signal for AAA. So he called up Hertz and Enterprise to rent a car and they just laughed at him. He was able to find the only rental car in west Texas at Budget, and it's a piece of junk. They asked if I was going to stick around to see the lights and I said "no, I'm going to try and find someplace out of the wind in Marfa for the night." The guy whose RV is still running told me that he lives next to a Hispanic rancher here in West Texas, who also has a big house on Padre Island, if he ever saw the Marfa Lights. The rancher told him that his wife wanted to take a trip here and see the lights. "Did you see them?" he asked. "Sure did, I used my binoculars and saw two Mexicans walking around with flashlights."

I made a search of Marfa, in which all the buildings are only one story tall, and found a spot on the grass in front of an auto repair shop with the storage units next door supposedly blocking the wind. But she was still rocking, and I was right on the main drag, HWY 90, and easily seen by anyone in town. Back to Allstays and about 70 miles away is Van Horn. I don't think there's any relationship to the car dealer in Wisconsin, but you never know. I'm not even sure if it's a Flying J or a Pilot, but a truck stop it is. I snuggled between a couple semis blocking the wind from the west and the wind turned to the north and now I'm parked in a semi trailer wind tunnel. As long as the wind is blowing straight at the front of the RV and there is now equal pressure on both sides, I'm not rocking at all.



But I don't know if I'll be able to open the slide. The driver on my left may not appreciate it. At least I have a cell signal.

Speaking of signals, even though I was passing by cell towers, I had no signal for that 88 miles of no services I mentioned yesterday.

Also, after I left Marfa I also left the protection of the mountains. It was back to open plains and high winds as I drove west and north to Van Horn.

Tomorrow, Sunday, I have no idea. I'm not sure I want to hit the road in these winds. Maybe I'll see what Van Horn has to offer and spend another night between the semis before venturing forth on Monday towards El Paso. Steve gave me a couple ideas, but after these dusty winds I need to find a truck wash, go shopping, clean the RV inside, maybe do some laundry and, here's an idea, I can research all the hiking around Guadalupe and Carlsbad. Hopefully the winds will diminish and the view from the highest point in Texas will not be a sea of dust clouds.

My final thought for today is that I think Texas may be entering an Oklahoma dust bowl of the 30's. With all the dead vegetation there will be nothing left to hold the soil together; animals will have nothing to eat, dead grass only lasts so long. I texted the girls that I was sitting at a gas station in Del Rio, looking at the motel across the street and the 20 or so dead palm trees along the road. I looked it up and found that if the crown is brown, the tree will not make a comeback. These are 30-40 year old palm trees up to 25 feet tall. You saw the picture yesterday of all the dead Ocotillo Cacti. My parking spot on the scenic overlook was adjacent to a sea of dead grass a foot high. Just think how that blowing dust of today may look in the heat of July and August.

Until next time.....