



Friends of the San Pedro River

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Bureau of Land Management 4070 E. Avenida Saracino

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The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area

Major Attractions

San Pedro House. Trails lead through one of the best bird-watching areas in the United States. An FSPR-operated visitor center provides SPRNCA information and a book store.

Fairbank Historic Townsite. An FSPR-operated museum and a self-guided tour help visitors explore this ghost town's buildings and cemetery.

Birdwatching Areas. The SPRNCA is a world class birdwatching area. Inquire at the San Pedro House for directions to birding locales.

Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenate. A three-mile round-trip trail leads to the ruins of this 18th-century Spanish military post.

Millville and Petroglyph Discovery Trail. Visitors follow a trail to the ruins of the famous Gird Silver Mill and views of ancient Native American rock art.

Murray Springs Clovis Site. One of the nation's premier Paleo-Indian archeological sites, this 13,000 year old site was recently designated a National Historic Landmark.

Other Historic Sites. Numerous historic and archeological sites dot the SPRNCA. All sites are protected by Federal law. Check for directions to sites for which visitation is encouraged.

The FSPR offers regularly scheduled nature and history walks to these sites and others. See our website for more information at:

www.sanpedroriver.org

In 1986 the Bureau of Land Management acquired 56,000 acres along the San Pedro River, later designated the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area or SPRNCA. More than 350 species of birds, 80 species of mammals, 2 native fish, and 68 species of amphibians and reptiles are found here. Cultural sites in the SPRNCA date back 13,000 years.

The SPRNCA is open for public use and enjoyment and offers a variety of recreational activities including hiking, bird watching, wildlife viewing, photography, back country camping, picnicing, guided tours, camping, seasonal hunting, horseback riding and environmental education.

Fairbank Historic Townsite



Fairbank Mercantile, 2014 Photo by Ron Stewart

Fairbank was an Old West railroad town, founded in 1882 during the Tombstone silver boom. From 1882 to 1903, Fairbank was Tombstone's train depot. The town had an elegant hotel, with a restaurant and bar, a post office, several businesses and a school. Chinese farmers raised crops along the River.

The famous and infamous historical characters of Tombstone passed through Fairbank. Manufactured goods bound for Tombstone came here first, concentrated ore and cattle were shipped out.

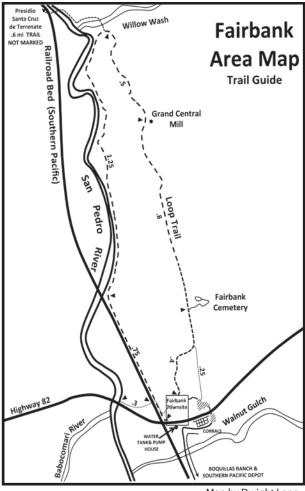
Fairbank was not as wild as Tombstone or Charleston, but it had its share of colorful residents and events, including the train robbery of 1900. Famous lawman Jeff Milton was a Fairbank resident for a time.

With several historic buildings remaining, Fairbank is now part of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. The area is open daily for the public to enjoy.

The Friends of the San Pedro River operate a bookstore and museum in the historic school that is open 9:30 am - 4:30 pm Friday, Saturday and Sunday.



Fairbank Area Hiking Trails



Map by Dwight Long

There are some great hikes to take nearby: Close-in walks, round trip distances

- San Pedro River, 2/3 mile
- Fairbank cemetery, 4/5 mile
- Little Boquillas corrals (south of Hwy 82), 1/4 mile
- Southern Pacific depot foundation, 2 miles
- Grand Central Mill site, 2 miles

Longer hikes, round trip distances

- Loop trail, 4 miles. North past cemetery, mill
- Presidio, 3 miles. From In Balance Ranch Road trailhead. No established trail from Fairbank.
- Little Boquillas Ranch HQ. Five miles south of Fairbank on road past corrals. Trail not marked.

Fairbank's Origin

Fairbank was founded in 1882 when the New Mexico and Arizona Railroad reached the junction of the San Pedro and Babocomari rivers. Local ranchers Harry McKinney and William Hall filed for land at the spot, drew up the plan for a town and started selling lots. The town had several names: Kendall, Junction City, Wye and finally Fairbank, named for Chicago investor Nathaniel Fairbank. The town was often erroneously designated "Fairbanks."

By March of 1882, there was a store, smithy, saloon and several houses. These businesses catered to passengers and freight going to and from Tombstone. The Fairbank Mercantile, which is still standing, also dates to 1882. Stagecoach rides from Fairbank to Tombstone cost \$1.50, about \$36 today. Some residents worked a mile north at the Grand Central Mill, which processed silver ore from Tombstone. Others were employed in the businesses in the town or surrounding ranches. A group of Chinese settlers raised crops in irrigated fields along the river. They employed town laborers in their "Chinese Gardens." Fairbank had about 300 residents in the 1890s.



Stagecoach in Fairbank, 1880s Tombstone Courthouse SHP



New Mexico and Arizona Depot, ca 1890s Arizona Historical Society



Montezuma Hotel, ca 1890s Arizona Historical Society

Railroads

Fairbank was a railroad town. Starting with the New Mexico and Arizona Railroad in 1882, four different railroads operated in the town. Phelps Dodge, the Bisbee copper mining company, built two of these: the Arizona and Southeastern, which reached Fairbank in 1888; and, the El Paso and Southwestern, 1901. By 1924, ownership of these lines was consolidated by the Southern Pacific Railroad, whose transcontinental route ran through Benson just north of Fairbank. By the 1920s, a network of rail lines connected Tombstone, Bisbee, Fort Huachuca, Patagonia and other cities in the area. Fairbank sat at the crossroads between the lines leading to these destinations. By the 1900s, many Fairbank residents worked maintaining the tracks and machines of these railroads, most others worked in businesses catering to passengers or on the Little Boquillas Ranch.



School, ca Early 1900s Bisbee Mining Museum



Current School, 1932
BLM Collection

The School

A school operated at Fairbank from 1884 until 1944. The original building burned in 1920; it was replaced with the current structure. Up to 50 students were taught by two teachers. The school was restored by the BLM in 2007.



Fairbank Mercantile, ca 1940s

Fairbank Becomes a Ghost Town

The last train depot closed in 1966 taking with it most of the jobs in town. The Fairbank Mercantile continued as a store, post office and gas station until 1972.