



TAKE A WALK, IF YOU DARE...

into the history of a Wild West railroad boom town, known for its saloon brawls, mysterious fires, and intriguing murders.

Walk the old streets, listen to the stories and discover if the tough, restless wild spirits of early Tucumcari still haunt both sides of the track.



Main Street in the early 1900s in Tucumcari: The Legal Tender may have held one of Tucumcari's best kept secrets. (Photo: Denver Public Library)

THE SALOONS, THE MAYHEM AND THE MURDERS

A rustling and rowdy railroad camp in the New Mexico Territory was established in 1901 when the Rock Island Railroad pushed across the West.

Local author Mary Grooms Clark noted that in the early years, the town was recorded to be one of the liveliest and toughest towns in the country where every man carried a six-gun; hence the early town label of Six Shooter Siding seemed to stick. The town soon took on the official name of Tucumcari.

Even before becoming sheriff, Alex Street owned the Legal Tender Saloon off Main (see image on left). As the story goes, Street was out of town and a saloon brawl there between railroaders and local cowboys broke out in 1901 that ended the lives of 13 men. It may very well be one of Tucumcari's best kept secrets.

Then there's the Wild West watering hole that had an early start to being known all over New Mexico for its "nightly brawls with guns and fists." That was the Red Light, located on the north side of railroad tracks. A couple stories discovered involving the Red Light support that reputation. One includes a triple murder that resulted from a refusal of a dance. Then there's Ruby's story, when jealous rage with a pair of scissors resulted in a bloody tragedy.

A 1903 traveler described the Tucumcari saloons in the El Paso Herald,

"ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL SALOONS WAS OWNED BY THE SHERIFF, ANOTHER BY HIS DEPUTY, AND EVEN THE COUNTY CLERK OWNED A FLOURISHING SALOON."

By 1903, at least 15 saloons were in operation.

THE VORENBERG

In 1910 the upscale, Spanish-style Vorenberg Hotel replaced the Legal Tender Saloon on Main. For the building's dedication in 1911, the lovely Vorenberg hosted an elegant dinner with Territorial Governor William J. Mills as the guest of honor.

One of the grandest hotels of Tucumcari also had connections to murder. Could the ghost of the Vorenberg's traveling salesman, Wendt Schmidt, who was a victim of a framing attempt and murder in room 36, still haunt Main? Could the spirit of a cafe server, Bertha Kappel, who was bludgeoned to death in 1947 with an axe by her husband, still try to take her early morning walk over the overpass to get to work? You be the judge.



(Photo: Denver Public Library)

SANDS-DORSEY DRUG

Built in 1910, in its history this Main Street icon was referred to as the Federal Building and housed the International Bank of Commerce, Miller's Drug Store and was then home to Sands-Dorsey Drug for years. Unfortunately, the building suffered a couple of fires. A suspicious fire in 2012 destroyed the structure.

A story that haunts quite a few locals to this day is the Bobby Gene Garcia murders that shook the town in 1966. The incident included the taking of local woman as a hostage by gunpoint to Sands-Dorsey Drug.



The Federal Building (Postcard photo from Tucumcari and Quay County Then and Now Facebook Group)



The Glenrock Hotel (Photo: Tucumcari Historical Museum- slightly modified) and Arzullia and Albertus (Photo from newspaper article).



GLENROCK HOTEL

Built uniquely on a street corner near the railroad tracks, this exquisite hotel saw its share of fascinating visitors. Glenrock guests included a sleeping psychic sorceress and her hypnotist husband who caused quite a stir in town in 1909 and a local business-woman who had a drink at the hotel bar in 1941 and never returned home.

THE STORIES AND MORE

The Saloons, the Mayhem and the Murders

- Legal Tender's Best Kept Secret
- Bad Men and a Triple Tucumcari Murder
- Red Light Ruby's Scissors

The Vorenberg

- Adolph the Axe Murderer
- Film, Fraud, and Framed

Sands-Dorsey Drug / International Bank of Commerce / Federal Building

- A Murderer Takes a Hostage

Glenrock Hotel

- The Amazing Alburto and Arzullia
- Maggie's Murder

Additional Hauntings, Sightings and Scary Stories and more spooky surprises!



MEET AT THE HISTORIC DEPOT

Your adventure will begin and end at the Tucumcari Railroad Museum. Full of stories itself, have some fun preparing for your walking tour by enjoying the history the museum has to offer.

Walking Tours:

Fridays and Saturdays: Oct. 15, 16, 22 and 23, 2021

\$20 (limit 15 per tour) and meet at 6:00 p.m. at the Depot

See [Tucumcari MainStreet Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/tucumcarimainstreet) (<https://www.facebook.com/tucumcarimainstreet>) for more information and **sign up online!**

