

Town of Poncha Springs Historic Timeline

This timeline has been constructed from multiple sources and is intended only for information for the 125th Anniversary.

- August 27, 1779 Governor Juan Bautista de Anza led a military expedition through Southern Colorado. In his diary, he recounted riding through San Luis Valley and over Poncha Pass, crossing the Rio Nepestele (Arkansas).
- 1806 Lt. Zebulon Pike spent Christmas Day at Squaw Creek, near present-day Poncha Springs.
- 1816-40s French fur traders and trappers begin moving into the mountains.
- 1832 Kit Carson passes through Poncha Springs.
- 1855 Colonel Thomas T. Fauntleroy led an army out of Fort Massachusetts to fight the Ute Indians. The army marched over Poncha Pass and engaged a band of Indians in between present day Salida and Poncha Springs.
- 1863 Nat Rich and Bob Hendricks built the first cabin in Poncha Springs and panned for gold in the Little Arkansas.
- 1865 John Burnett family homesteaded while area was still a territory. John was the first Indian Agent.
- 1867 First white child was born, Jim Rich
Baldwin family was first to locate at Poncha Hot Springs. They built a cabin and a small dam to make a swimming pool.
- 1868 Current Poncha Springs established as South Arkansas.
- John McPherson bought Rich's "squatters' rights"
- John McPherson moved from Cottonwood Creek area to today's Poncha Springs and opened the South Arkansas Post Office.
- Ira King became the first postmaster of the South Arkansas Post Office
- The first hot springs bath was created by Henry Weber.
- 1870 Poncha Springs' toll road built

- Henry Weber came and established the first meat market.
- Joseph and Annabelle Hutchinson settled
- 1874 1st fire destroys much of Town
James True laid out Town before the boom. He bought McPherson's claim and opened a General Store
- 1876-77 "The Grasshopper Years", most crops were destroyed
- 1877 Name changed from South Arkansas to Poncho Springs
- 1878 The Jackson Hotel was built
- Burnett log home used for Indian Trading
- Poncha Springs Depot
- 1879 First butcher shop built by Sprague and Smith
Town included a grocery, general store, blacksmith, lumber yard and multiple saloons
- First brick building in town was the Poncha Springs Bank
- February 2, Chaffee County formed from Lake County
- 1880 December 8: Poncha Spring incorporates
- Hot Springs Hotel Built
- Fire destroys buildings in Town
- 1881 Population of Poncha Springs reached 5,000
- Fire destroys most buildings in Town
- 1882 The brick Schoolhouse was built
- The Poncho Herald was established as the Town's newspaper, F.M. Tompkins.
- Fire destroys 20 buildings in Town
- Presbyterian Church in Poncha was built
- 1883 67 students were enrolled in school

- First class graduated from new school
- 1884 Poncha Hot Springs owners built ten bath rooms and boarding rooms
- 1887 Town name changed to Poncho Springs
- 1890 Narrow gauge railroad through Poncha to Alamosa
- 1900 Joe Cumins moved from San Luis Valley and was the first Forest Service Ranger.
- 1901 Becks moved into house on True Avenue, one of the oldest houses built by Nat Rich, Hutchinson, and McGruder.
- 1902 Hot Springs Hotel burns
- 1927 Town name changed to Poncha Springs
- 1941 Water piped from Hot Springs to Salida for bathhouse
- 1950 Mears Junction—R.R. abandoned
- 1958 Last class graduated from Poncha School