

Knippa, originally known as Chatfield, is on the Southern Pacific Railroad, U.S. Highway 90, and the Frio River, between Sabinal and Uvalde in southeastern Uvalde County. It was named for founder George Knippa, who moved his family to the site in the 1880s. Knippa had been a frequent visitor to the semiarid Frio River area of Uvalde County in the 1870s and early 1880s, a period of abundant rainfall in the area, and witnessed an open country of luxuriant grazing land traversed by spring-fed rivers. He moved his family from Fayette County to the railroad siding of Chatfield soon after the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway had extended its railroad line west from San Antonio to Uvalde.

The period of abundant rainfall in the Frio River region ended with the drought of the early 1890s, dashing the hopes of many of the farming families who had followed Knippa to the area. Around 1900 the rains returned, and a new wave of settlers, mostly Germans, moved to Knippa. A post office was opened in 1898. On February 16, 1898, the Uvalde County Commissioners Court established School District No. 12 at Knippa and authorized a school building. In 1900 fourteen students attended the one-teacher school. A two-room school was built in 1907.

A mine for traprock, an igneous rock used in road construction, was opened west of Knippa around 1905 and attracted Mexican laborers to the area. The traprock quarried at Knippa was used to ballast the Southern Pacific Railroad. Because the quarry was originally opened up as a gold mine, it was said that all of the railroad ballast contained a small amount of gold.

Most of the original settlers in the community were Lutherans. A Lutheran church was built on land donated by George Knippa in 1910. Church services, directed by Rev. Gottlieb Langer, were conducted in German. At the beginning of World War I, however, the Uvalde Council of Defense prohibited the use of German. The community responded by taking the council to court, and the prohibition was eventually rescinded by the United States Supreme Court.

By 1914 Knippa had a population of fifty, telephone connections, two cotton gins, two general stores, and two lumber companies. The St. Joseph's Church, a Catholic mission, was constructed in 1913 through the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Knippa. In 1915 a Baptist church was built in the community, with Reverend Rubottom as minister. A two-room school building was built in 1907. The school was moved to a brick structure in 1924 and was accredited in 1926. A small one-room school, constructed in 1927, served as a catechetical center and was the site of many Mexican-American social events.

In 1929 Knippa had a estimated population of 400 and twelve businesses; by 1933 the population had dropped to an estimated 150. By the end of World War II and for the four succeeding decades the population was 325. In 1944 the Methodist, Baptist, and Church of Christ congregations were holding regular services at Knippa; the Church of Christ constructed a new building in 1948. Rev. Raymond Wolf, pastor of the Knippa Lutheran Church between 1957 and 1967, was selected Rural Minister of the Year for Texas in 1964. In 1990 St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, and the Church of Christ were active in Knippa. The population was 360, and the town had nine businesses. In 2000 the town had 739 inhabitants and nineteen businesses.

As posted by [Les Walker](#) on Facebook in German Texan History,
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