



From the Director:

Center for Big Bend Studies in the 2020 Pandemic

This year has been a trying year for us all, and I hope that everyone has had a healthy 2020 given the circumstances. I want to thank everyone for your continued support of the Center as we work through this strange time and keep everyone apprised of changes we are making at the Center. We have had some staffing transitions beginning with the retirement of Andy Cloud as director and Richard Walter as staff archaeologist. Erika Blecha is our newest project archaeologist, Melanie Blackman is now our program coordinator, and Eden Meadows is our newest archaeologist. I encourage you all to give them a warm welcome. I assumed the position of director in 2020 after working as a project archaeologist at the Center since 2016.

This is the first year we have had to cancel our conference since it began in 1994, but I felt it was important for the safety of our members and attendees. Like most of you, the first couple of months in early 2020 were difficult for us but we were able to plan a safe field schedule that continued our partnership with the University of Kansas

(KU). This year we excavated at San Esteban rockshelter, and KU helped us finish work at the Genevieve Lykes Duncan site with

some exciting results (see articles in this newsletter). We also developed a new set of research programs that expands as well as sharpens our focus. We have also better defined our commitment to landowners and reaffirmed our position as stewards of human history in the region. This year we submitted some new grant applications to get an innovative chapter of research off the ground, and we hope to hear back in the coming months. We have also redesigned our website and increased our social media presence to more regularly engage with our members and the public—with the goal of attracting new members. To this end, beginning in 2021, we will begin issuing our newsletter quarterly in both digital and print options. We will also provide year-end reports for members highlighting what we have accomplished during a calendar year. We appreciate your patience during this time of transition and I hope to see you in person in 2021.

—Bryon Schroeder



San Esteban Update

This summer, after establishing Covid-19 precautions, the Center partnered with the University of Kansas again for a 20-day field session at San Esteban Rockshelter. The goal of our ongoing project is to find a rockshelter in the Big Bend region that has not been destroyed by looting and which contains a complete record of human occupation from the Pleistocene and Holocene Epochs. So far, we have not recovered artifacts or a record of oc-

cupation that predates 2,000 years old, but we are optimistic that San Esteban has the potential for the full record of human occupation in the region.

We knew going into this summer's session that the sediment deposits and archaeological record at San Esteban are complex. Typically, we would try to expand our excavations into a large block of test units; however, the site is so well preserved that work was slower than antic-

ipated. Ultimately, in the interest of time, we decided to focus on just a handful of excavation areas. We opened a total of five 1 by 1 meter units across the site. The main area revealed complex occupational levels likely ranging in age from Late Archaic at the bottom of this year's excavation (ca. 2,000 years ago) up to the modern day at the top. This area has a complex stratigraphy that includes historic floors near the surface, followed by a series of prepared fiber floors covered in ash and silt. These prepared floors are interesting and, currently, we think they may represent a



Excavation in progress at San Esteban.

series of living surfaces that are likely Late Prehistoric (ca. 500 years old).

What they show us, in terms of how people used the site, is that occupants would prepare the floor of the shelter with fiber, then silt would accumulate during periods of abandonment, creating a series of fiber sandwiched between beds of ash. We also found places where it seems the occupants dumped hot rocks on fiber surfaces and singed the grass floors, possibly to kill any pests living in the grasses, but this may also have happened as groups emptied the food contents out of earth ovens. Below these surfaces is a dense concentration of ash for which we see no evidence of burning in place, suggesting that the occupants were storing ash for some currently unknown purpose. We are aware of ethnographic examples of ash used for a wide variety of purposes, but we are not certain what it was used for in the Big Bend region. However, in one ash deposit we did recover an arrowpoint that seemed to be purposefully placed into the ash. We are currently researching why site occupants might have been storing ash, and we are

looking for other archaeological sites with similar deposits.

Below the ash are a series of grass-lined pits. Only a few artifacts were recovered from these pits, and they are more likely storage facilities for food/raw material instead of occupational areas. While these pits have been found throughout the Trans-Pecos, no one has focused research on the formation and use of them. Currently, we think they were used for caching raw plant material for use as fuel, tools, and food, and possibly the occupants never returned to them. We suspect these pits are about 2,000 years old, but we need to radiocarbon date them before we can be certain. The most unusual of these pits was composed almost entirely of pecan leaves and compound leaves. We have found burned pecan charcoal in other contexts but never the compound leaves. This direct evidence is critical for helping us reconstruct the environment of the region. In terms of artifacts, we mostly found faunal remains and paleobotanicals like seeds, grasses, and sticks from this area. We also found several well-preserved small yellow bird feathers, El Paso

brownware ceramics (ca. A.D. 1200–1500), and maize cobs throughout the test units. One corncob came from near the bottom of the main area of the excavation and was sent out for radiocarbon dating as soon as we got back; it returned a date of about 1,800 years old.

This year we also opened a small test unit beneath a large boulder outside of the shelter. We wanted to know if there were any cultural deposits left intact after the railroad construction. We found that the fill from railroad construction buried a refuse midden from the pre-Columbian occupation of the

shelter. The stratigraphy shows a few buried soils which develop in stable conditions, indicating the area was not subject to flooding or large influxes of sediments. We can directly date these buried soils and learn when they formed, which will tell us when people utilized these surfaces. We will be sending out samples from the lowermost soil to be dated and hope to have the results back sometime this winter.

The most exciting part of the site we excavated this summer was a portion where we found the remnants of numerous organic artifacts on the surface the year before. This area is directly adjacent to a large looted hole that we felt contained sediments that date to around 13,000 years old. Our excavation adjacent to this looted portion of the site found most of the area contains sediments and organic materials from a packrat midden and animal disturbance, but we found one abrupt contact into intact sediments. On this buried surface we found what appears to be a cache of atlatl gear. The cache contained a hafted dart point on a wooden foreshaft, a wooden dart foreshaft, part of a broken atlatl dart with the

fletching removed, and a dart point with sinew still attached.

Atlatl caches are known in sheltered sites throughout the greater US Southwest region; finding one in West Texas places the region into a broader context. We are currently sending all the atlatl gear out for radiocarbon dating and the dart tips for blood residue analysis so we can see what animal they were hunting. Included near this cache were other unique artifacts like a bracelet with Gulf Coast *Olivella* sp shell beads, a bone awl with incised chevron patterns, a piece of a woven mat, and one complete sandal. This portion of the excavation went much deeper than any of us expected—almost 2.5 meters. At the bottom of the excavation we found mineralized canid bone, suggesting we may have the Pleistocene Epoch preserved in this portion of the site and are optimistic it will produce artifacts next year. This also suggests the rockshelter has changed shape over the last 13,000 years of occupation and this affects how humans utilized the shelter.

The 2020 field season at San Esteban confirmed that, despite years of unscientific digging and artifact collecting, there are small portions of the site that remain unaltered. We now know it contains a continuous occupation record from its historic use during the Chihuahua Trail era back to at least 4,000 years ago and, we hope, the full 13,000 years that humans have occupied North America. We may have confirmed that the shelter has a small portion of the Pleistocene Epoch remaining which would make it the only site where it is still possible to understand the full 13,000 year sequence of human occupation in the Big Bend re-

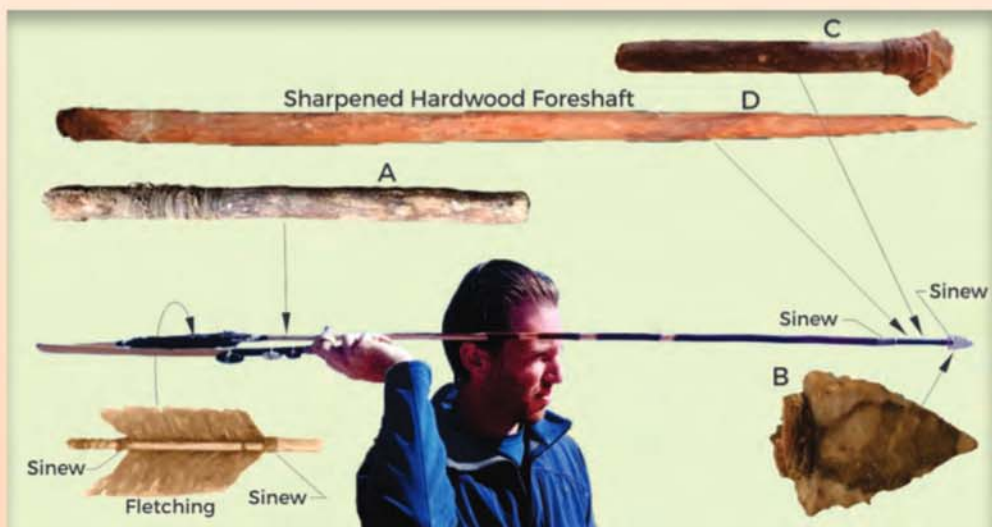
gion. Altogether, we found 18 cultural features (such as architectural remains and fire hearths). Features are important because they are areas where humans congregated and left clues about their lives. We also recovered amazing perishable and botanical artifacts that will increase our understanding of the region and past human behavior.

We want to thank the Hubbard Family of the Bar Triangle Ranch for allowing us access to the shelter, David Williams and the MacGuire Ranch for letting us use their bunkhouse, and, finally, the Texas Historical Commission for designating and protecting the site as a State Antiquities Landmark.

—Mason Niquette



Excavation in the main area of San Esteban.



Artifacts from Atlatl cache: A.) is a portion of a dart and the dimple is where the atlatl would connect to throw the dart; B.) dart point with sinew; C.) is hafted dart point on foreshaft; D.) is a hardwood foreshaft tip (essentially a wooden spear-tip) with a red staining.

Developing New Archaeological Site Conservation Programs in the Big Bend

The Vision

The Texas Big Bend region contains some of the most well-preserved archaeological sites in North America. Despite the incredible preservation and immeasurable potential to contribute to our understanding of the human past, the region has been the focus of only a few dedicated archaeological research projects, mainly under the auspices of the Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program (TAP). The goal of the Center is to expand TAP into a more focused set of research initiatives with defined programs, timelines, and objectives. This **Texas Big Bend Archaeological Initiative** defines 23 cultural heritage-oriented programs, enabling focused research and funding opportunities into areas with the most potential to increase the visibility and impact of the Center beyond the West Texas region. Each program is designed to allow staff and leading outside researchers to utilize the Big Bend as a cutting-edge archaeological laboratory.

The Center has made a range of extraordinary discoveries over the years that have compelled sweeping revisions to the region's deep history. Through extensive archaeological surveys and excavations, as well as oral history and archival research, the Center has positioned itself as the undisputed leader in Big Bend cultural scholarship. From the earliest known Paleoindian occupations to the settlement period by Hispanic and Anglo pioneers, research conducted by the Center has broadened our understanding of over 11,000 years of the region's past, and we will continue to be the leader in the future.

Looking to the future!

Since its inception in 1987, the Center for Big Bend Studies of Sul Ross State University has been committed to the preservation and education of the deep human history in the Texas Big Bend region. In 1995 under the leadership of Robert Mallouf, the Center expanded into the archaeology of the region and began to offer archaeology and anthropology courses by creating a minor in anthropology at Sul Ross State University. To date, much of the Center's fundraising and research efforts were conducted under the auspices of TAP. Since 2004, TAP has provided a framework for financial agencies to familiarize with the Center but, as the discipline grows, an update is needed.

So, in early 2020, the Center started to rewrite and add to its research programs to ensure long-term fundraising and academic success. The result is the still-evolving **Texas Big Bend Archaeological Initiative**, the goal

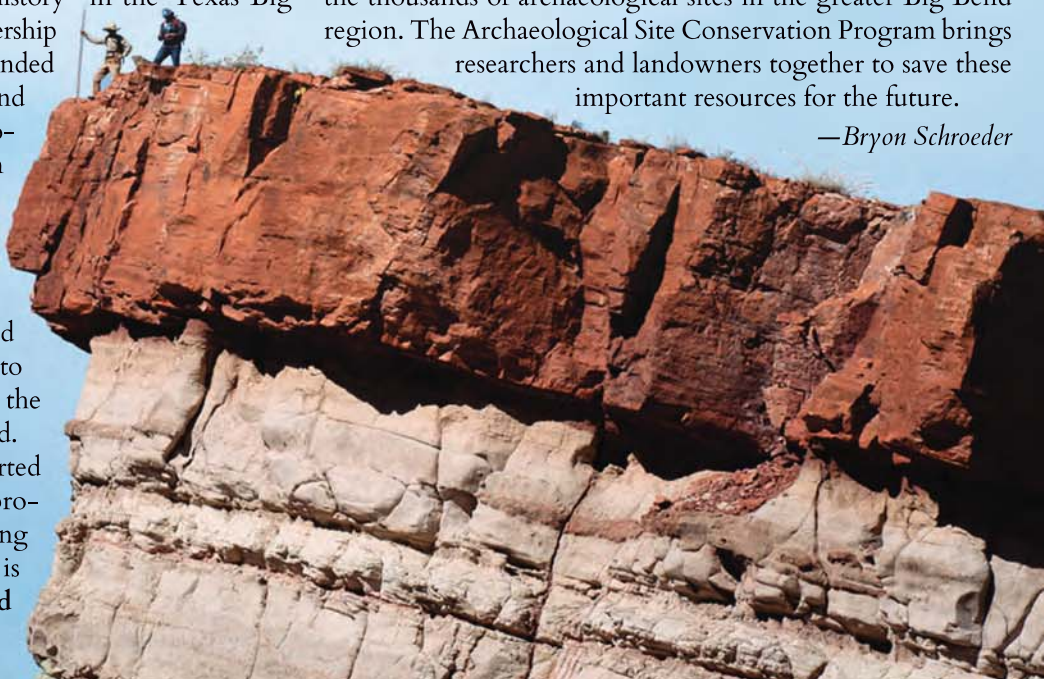
of which is to shift the focus of the Center towards educational programs that contribute to local and regional knowledge. In the coming years, we hope to pull in more cutting-edge researchers and a new group of students. The Texas Big Bend Archaeological Initiative is our first step in a new period of engagement with Sul Ross State University, the local community, and the larger discipline. The foundation of these programs is our **Archaeological Site Conservation Program**.

A recent report put out by the Texas A&M Natural Resource Institute indicates there are over 16 million acres of privately held land in the West Texas region alone. Our Archaeological Site Conservation Program provides West Texas land stewards with a resource that covers the benefits of working with the Center towards protecting our rich cultural legacy. There are plenty of myths about documenting archaeological sites on private land and our goal is to provide a brief guide. Ultimately, we want everyone to appreciate the thousands of years of human adaptation to this rugged country, and that begins with working relationships between landowners and the Center. Detailed below is the Archaeological Site Conservation Program.

Archaeological Site Conservation Program

Humans have occupied the Big Bend region for as long as 13,000 years. The camps and artifacts left by hundreds of generations of hunter-gatherers across this rugged terrain offer researchers an incredible window into human adaptation to the Chihuahuan Desert. The Center for Big Bend Studies is committed to unlocking the human past through researching and preserving the thousands of archaeological sites in the greater Big Bend region. The Archaeological Site Conservation Program brings researchers and landowners together to save these important resources for the future.

—Bryon Schroeder



CBBS Archaeological Site Conservation Program

What We Do

In an initial consultation, CBBS researchers work with landowners and ranch managers to document known cultural resources and identify areas of high probability for archaeological reconnaissance.

CBBS staff will then spend time documenting and mapping as many of the cultural resources as time and funding allows, focusing on:

- △ Documenting archaeological site locations
- △ Assessing condition of sites
- △ Determining age of resources
- △ Determining further research potential

What You Get

The conservation program provides landowners and managers with information to better manage their cultural resources. The findings and recommendations help landowners and ranch managers understand the deep human history of their land with the hope of preserving it for the future. Program participants will receive:

- △ Detailed maps and reports containing explanations of each archaeological resource identified
- △ Google Earth files for personal use
- △ Preservation recommendations for each archaeological resource identified by CBBS specialists
- △ Trip reports detailing each trip taken by CBBS and the findings from your land

Tax Deductible Donations to the CBBS Archaeological Site Conservation Program support the costs associated with mapping and documenting a truly non-renewable resource—the past. Please help us identify and preserve the deep human history of the Big Bend region by either making a donation or joining the conservation effort today.

We Need your Help

The Center is embarking on a new research project to radiocarbon date and map the extent of maize use in the Big Bend region. We currently have about two dozen dates that indicate a nearly 2,000-year continuous use of corn in the region, but we have hundreds of corncobs that remain to be dated. We are hoping to expand our knowledge about the timing and use of horticulture in the region by radiocarbon dating an additional 150 corncobs from across the entire

Trans-Pecos region. But we need access to sites that may contain corn (like

rockshelters and caves) or artifact collections that contain maize; either of these will

hurdle is our need for financial help to offset the cost of radiocarbon dates, as a project

of this scale is expensive. A single radiocarbon date costs \$299 and we are proposing these 150 new corn dates from corn found across the entire Trans-Pecos region. It will cost us \$45,000 for the radiocarbon dates alone and any support will help. Help us understand this important period of pre-Columbian Trans-Pecos history! If you have any question about this project,

please reach out to Bryon Schroeder (bryon.schroeder@sulross.edu).



Examples of prehistoric corn from Big Bend. Photo by Robert Mallouf.

help us understand where and when corn was used in the Trans-Pecos. The biggest



Figure 1. The hard workers: Eden Meadows (CBBS), Bryon Schroeder (CBBS), Kara Johannesen (CBBS), Nic Redford (KU), Paige Englert (KU), Josh Collins (KU), R. Mason Niquette (KU).

Hot Days, Hot Rocks, Hot Discoveries at GLD Site

The summer of 2020 was full of long field sessions in the hot West Texas sun with our colleagues from Odyssey Archaeological Research at the University of Kansas (KU). The most grueling session spanned 12 days in the middle of July at the Genevieve Lykes Duncan (GLD) site. With the extra help KU provided, we were able to hack down 2 meters below the Late Paleoindian occupation, in a 2 x 4 m block, finally completing years of work in the main excavation area of the site.

Though we did not locate any Clovis (13,300–2,800 years old) cultural materials in the main block excavation, we opened up a large enough area to get a better glimpse into the stratigraphy of the arroyo. Geoarchaeologist Dr. Rolfé Mandel from KU made several subsequent visits to the site to collect soil, stable isotopes, thin sections, and radiocarbon samples from the top of the arroyo to the bottom of the 2 x 4 m block. Two additional samples were collected from just above a newly identified gravel layer at the bottom of the 2 x 4 m unit (almost 4 m below the ground surface) for Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) dating. OSL dating is a method for determining the age of buried sediments; it essentially dates the last time a sand particle was exposed to the sun. This type of dating method is used when no organic material is present in a layer of sediment or soil for dating and works best in areas with increased sand. The OSL dates at GLD will tell us how much time is represented between two gravels lenses that contain what we think is a Clovis-aged soil and how long it took to form.

After our work at the main block of GLD concluded in July, we shifted our focus to the west side of the arroyo



Figure 2. KU graduate student, Mason Niquette, inspecting the stratigraphy of the finished 2 x 4 m block excavation.



Figure 3. Dr. Rolfe Mandel and CBBS archaeologist, Erika Blecha, collecting an OSL sample.

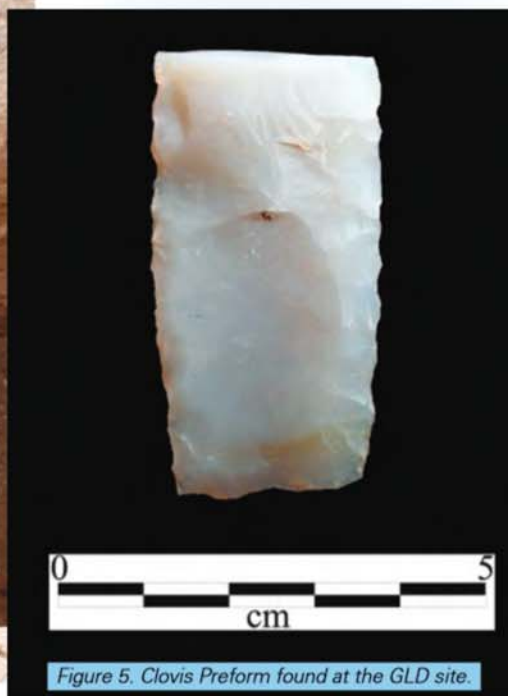


Figure 5. Clovis Preform found at the GLD site.

where a small crew of CBBS staff and volunteers spent 10 days in August, excavating three thermal features that were previously located in a backhoe trench. The radiocarbon dates from each feature overlap at about 9,200 years before present, which is why we were interested in them. The opportunity to excavate thermal features utilized within such a close period is rare and even rarer to research and compare them in the context of changing Paleo/Archaic lifeways—a presumed transition from hunting to increased plant processing.

Although a backhoe trench bisected the three features, our excavation work this summer indicates that they were originally part of one large earth oven facility (Black and Thoms 2014). Excavation of the features revealed small fragments of burned bone, mesquite seeds, and branches; also noted was lithic debitage as well as mano and metate fragments. Dirt removed from all the features was collected for future flotation and faunal, macrobotanical, and phytolith analyses. This will help us understand what people were cooking here and how it may have changed through time.

Saving the best for last, perhaps the most exciting discovery at the GLD site this summer came from a volunteer, Michael Price, who was wandering the old backhoe piles while 02 ranch hand Fernando Villalobos excavated backhoe trenches. Price located a chalcedony Clovis preform base on the side of an old backhoe trench on the west side of the arroyo. This is the first Clovis artifact retrieved from a buried context in the Big Bend region. We previously had attained a radiocarbon date on charcoal that was Clovis-aged, and now the Clovis preform suggests there is a buried occupation on the west side of the arroyo at the GLD site. We already have plans in place for a 2021 field session focused on finding the first buried Clovis site in the Big Bend region!

—Erika Blecha



Figure 4. CBBS archaeologist and volunteers working on the west bank of the GLD site.

New Discoveries and Re

Recent discoveries by the CBBS at the La Junta villages (around present-day Presidio, Texas) underscore a renewed effort and promise to reveal greater insights into this largely peripheral human adaptation to the northern Chihuahuan Desert. The vast majority of work conducted at these Puebloan sites took place in the late 1930s through the 1940s by pioneer archaeologists J. Charles Kelley, Donald J. Lehmer, and William J. Shackelford. Through excavations at the Millington, Loma Alta, and Polvo sites, a chronology and architectural sequence was developed that has remained central to our understanding of these villagers' lifeways. In spite of the significance of these sites, and the many questions that remain, more than half a century passed before additional work took place. However, the testing conducted at Polvo by the Office of the State Archeologist in 1994, Section 106 compliance work at Arroyo de la Presa in 2001, and salvage and testing at Millington in 2006 by the CBBS did not reach the scale of effort achieved by Kelley and his colleagues. And since then, aside from a few exploratory site visits, no further work has been conducted.

That is about to change

Even as the CBBS is actively applying for grants to carry out a comprehensive program of research at La Junta, several site visits have resulted in new discoveries that are bringing the area back into focus. In January of 2020, CBBS archaeologists toured the Loma Alta, Coppenbarger, Millington, and Polvo sites to assess their potential for future research. At the Coppenbarger site—a heavily eroded floodplain village site—countless ceramic artifacts were documented in addition to a recently exposed animal maxilla and mandible. During the same visit, a cupreous metal arrowpoint was also discovered, which appears to be a first



Cupreous metal arrowpoint fragment in situ at the Coppenbarger site.

for the La Junta villages. In consultation with historical archaeologists in adjacent regions, this point appears similar to those used by Apache and Comanche groups during the protohistoric period and may represent an attack upon the village. Research regarding this and other possibilities is ongoing.

In mid-April, a small CBBS crew returned to the Coppenbarger site to recover the previously discovered maxilla and mandible actively eroding out of hummocks. Although originally suspected of being bison, once the specimens were examined closely in the lab, they were identified as either a donkey or a Berber horse introduced to the region by the Spanish. During that same visit, several pieces of burned daub were found on the sideslope of a hummock, indicating the possible presence of a pithouse. It was a significant find since the quantity and nature of the artifact assemblage suggests the site was a pithouse village. However, no evidence of any structures has been found. Thus, the

discovery of daub—a diagnostic artifact of wattle and daub construction—was worthy of further investigation.

Two weeks later, CBBS archaeologist David Keller returned to the site to examine the likelihood of intact pithouse remains. On the same hummock, two additional daub fragments were documented that appeared to be embedded. After clearing the surface, a small excavation around these fragments revealed additional daub fragments and a plainware ceramic spall. Once these were mapped and removed, the excavation continued to a depth of 35 cm below the sur-

face. There, in the profile of the north wall, a ca. 5-cm-thick ashy cultural zone was revealed that overlaid a dense, sterile clay. All dirt was screened, and animal bones, daub fragments, and abundant woody charcoal were collected.

Both large fragments of daub that were collected display imprints of the sticks they



A sample of artifacts from Feature 30 at the Coppenbarger site.

Renewed Focus at La Junta

were once adhered to. Additionally, some of the woody charcoal appears to be stick fragments used in construction, with a few pieces recognized as probable river cane and others as sotol or lechuguilla stalks. Although the excavation failed to reveal an actual pithouse, it suggests that the daub fragments may have been in a primary post-occupational context (following the evident burning and collapse of the structure). Considering their location relative to the hummock, the lightly oxidized soil beneath the burned daub, and the easily discerned ashy layer in the excavation profile, it is believed that the mesquite-stabilized hummock represents the remains of a pithouse structure and that the excavated daub represents the outer extent of roof supports or roof- or wall-fall following its collapse.

Although research at La Junta has languished for decades, the CBBS continues to make small inroads while preparing for a more comprehensive program that will advance scholarship and understanding of the La Junta region while promoting cross-border collaboration with our fellow researchers in Mexico.

—David W. Keller



CBBS director, Bryon Schroeder, excavating a maxilla at the Coppenbarger site.

Profile of test excavation of Feature 30 showing the cultural zone, underlying sterile clay, and overburden.



CBBS archaeologist, Eden Meadows, during excavation of a mandible at the Coppenbarger site.



Daub samples from Feature 30.

Breathing Life into **Ojo Carrizo**

In 1913, 32-year-old Demetrio Vasquez homesteaded three sections of land below Cleveland Peak in the Sierra Vieja breaks north of Pinto Canyon. There, in the recesses of a deep canyon beside a spring known as Ojo Carrizo, he began building the three rooms of a mud-mortared stone house that would fulfill his state obligations for improving the land and provide shelter for him and his family.

Born in 1881 in the river hamlet of Ruidosa, Texas, Demetrio wasted little time before taking up cowboying on the prosperous Love Ranch above the rimrock where he would work for the next half century. Demetrio stocked his own ranch with sheep and Angora goats, but aside from regular visits to check on his stock, he never lived there. Each spring and fall, however, he brought his entire family which, by the late 1930s, consisted of a total of 10 children. There, along with his wife and sons and daughters, Demetrio packed his mules, and together they descended the steep trail to the Vasquez Ranch where they would spend their days rounding up, marking, castrating, and shearing the stock. After an arduous two weeks of work, the family packed the wool and mohair atop



The restored rock house at Ojo Carrizo, looking north.



The Vasquez family branding at Ojo Carrizo.



Demetrio Vasquez and one of his children around 1940.

the mules to ascend the trail and load their season's harvest in a borrowed truck for the trip to Marfa.

Demetrio ranched at Ojo Carrizo in this way for 33 years. But by 1952, at the age of 71, he retired, sold the ranch to neighbor Blas Benavides, and moved to El Paso where he would live out the remainder of his life. Following Demetrio's departure, the house stood vacant. Although it may have been used by ranch hands as a line camp, or by hunters during

deer season, Blas likely had little use for the structure. Decades passed, with rain and rodents doing their work, until by the time the property was acquired by Jeff Fort in 1998, the house hung in the balance. But the little house and its associated spring and peach trees planted by Demetrio a century ago made for a quaint and picturesque setting—one that Jeff didn't want to lose. For that reason, in the last few years, his workers Joel and Antonio have largely restored the house to its former glory. During a recent visit by CBBS staff, guided by Jeff and Kristina Fort, the house made for a perfect setting for a relaxing lunch. Rustic and drafty, it is nonetheless stabilized to the extent it should survive another few decades at least. Hats off to Jeff for protecting one of the cultural jewels of the Sierra Viejas!

—David W. Keller

In the Shadow of the Chinatis wins Al Lowman Memorial Prize for local history

This past February, *In the Shadow of the Chinatis: A History of Pinto Canyon in the Big Bend*, received one of the highest honors for local histories at the 2020 Texas State Historical Association's annual meeting in Austin. Written by CBBS archaeologist and historian David Keller and published by Texas A&M University Press in 2019, the book combines narratives of history, natural history, and archaeology, to tell the story of Pinto Canyon as well as the people who once inhabited it. Highly favorable reviews appeared in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, the *Texas Observer*, and the *San Antonio Express News*. "Receiving this award was a

David Keller receiving the Al Lowman Memorial Prize at the Texas State Historical Association award ceremony.



Award certificate for the Al Lowman Memorial Prize.

real honor," said Keller. "Being at the ceremony placed me in the company of many well-respected and well-published historians. It was simply a delight." The Al Lowman Memorial Prize was established in 2013 in tribute to Al Lowman, a bibliophile, connoisseur of well-designed books, and a much-loved figure in Texas history circles.

Thank You!

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The CBBS extends sincere thanks to foundations and individuals who have provided support since publication of the 2019 newsletter. These contributions have played significant roles in our many achievements. Listed below are all contributors based on a cumulative total.

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Fort Davis Artifact Identification Project Completed

In August of 2018 the CBBS entered into an agreement with Fort Davis National Historic Site (FODA) to evaluate and identify some 6,800 uncatalogued archaeological materials. These specimens represent a backlog of artifacts at FODA that were collected under a range of small in-house construction and maintenance projects as well as by unofficial visitor and staff collections made since the 1980s. By the project's end in September of 2020, CBBS archaeologist David Keller had identified a total of 9,049 artifacts—far exceeding the project's initial goals.

Although many of the artifacts relate to occupations prior to and after the military period, the vast majority appear to relate to the post-Civil War occupation of the Fort between 1867 and 1891—the period of time when it was manned by various cavalry and infantry regiments comprised of the famed Buffalo Soldiers. In his subsequent analysis, Keller characterized the collection as being dominated by construction-related materials (nails and wire), domestic/culinary materials (glass and ceramic), military materials (cartridge casings, bullets), and clothing (buttons).

A number of artifacts stood out from the rest either in quality or interpretive value. Among these were wagon and harness parts, such as thimble skeins, clevis hitches, singletree clips, hammerstraps, and a neck yoke pole ring; and coins, including a gambling token stamped “in memory of the good old days 1768,” an 1888 Mexican Centavo, an 1887 Indian head penny, and a modified ¼ de Real 1860 Mexican coin. Also of interest were a number of unique, hand-forged objects such as a spike modified into an eye hook, an eyelet fashioned from a nail, a hoof pick, and a handmade wire scarifier. Other notable items include a Colt Walker powder flask, canon friction primers, and a star rock drill bit, among many others.

In addition to addressing the park's backlog of artifacts, the project also added significantly to the park's museum collection database as well as to the NPS Web Catalog—select items made available digitally to researchers, educators, students, and the general public. As one of several projects the CBBS has conducted over the

years in partnership with the National Park Service, it is also one that advances the stewardship of our nation's history.

—David W. Keller



Ox Shoes.



Gambling token.



Hand-forged hoof pick.



Cannon friction primers.



Singletree clip.



Clevis hitch.

Ongoing Work on Boot Ranch

Since February of 2019, the CBBS has been conducting archaeological research on Boot Ranch, located some 15 miles northeast of Alpine. Composed of a cluster of low limestone hills and associated alluvial fans and cobble-strewn plains, the ranch provides a geological counterpoint to the igneous deposits of the adjacent Davis Mountains. That, coupled with the fact that the ranch has no live water (springs or perennial creeks), suggests that we might expect the archaeological record to be equally distinct. To date, nearly 3,000 acres have been surveyed, amounting to 16% of the entire ranch—a remarkable degree of coverage. Within that surveyed area, a total of 133 sites have been recorded. Most of the sites are prehistoric open campsites and food processing sites, including a handful that contain robust and well-developed ring middens. Yet other sites are enigmatic, such as one that consists of a single large cobble-lined hearth on top of a small butte.

In addition to survey, a number of thermal features have been tested and 14 radiocarbon dates have been submitted for analysis. The results indicate that the ranch was utilized for at least the last 5,000 years, and probably longer. The median radiocarbon dates range from 4,967 B.P. to as recent as 385 B.P. However, more than 70% of the dates cluster within the Late Archaic and Late Prehistoric periods. Recovered diagnostic artifacts indicate an even greater date range, including one Late Paleoindian projectile, one Early Archaic projectile, and one Clear Fork gouge—a diagnostic woodworking tool that also dates to the Early Archaic. But there are other ways the artifacts' temporal breakdown do not mirror the radiocarbon dates: a full 65% of diagnostic projectiles date to the Late Archaic compared to only 36% of radiocarbon samples that date to this period. And to add to the confusion, only one arrowpoint has been found whereas five of the radiocarbon samples date to the Late Prehistoric period.

What does it all mean? The search for answers to this and other questions is ongoing. But several hypotheses arise: the discrepancy might be explained as a sampling error regarding radiocarbon samples (later features preserve better) coupled with the lower visibility of arrowpoints. Yet we cannot overlook the possibility that it may indicate Late Prehistoric occupants were more focused on plant gathering and processing than Late Archaic people. In other words, the discrepancy may actually reflect the kind of behavioral explanation that we yearn to understand. As research on the ranch continues, additional radiocarbon dates along with other special samples—notably macro- and micro-botanical remains—will likely shed much more light on the emerging picture of prehistory on Boot Ranch. And, hopefully, this data will help narrow the remaining gaps in our understanding of past human behavior in this unique setting.

The Center would like to thank Anne Calaway for her support of this project.

—David W. Keller



View overlooking peak-top cairn on Boot Ranch.



Selection of dart points collected from Boot Ranch.



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Mission

The Center for Big Bend Studies fosters interdisciplinary scholarship of the diverse prehistoric, historic, and modern cultures of the borderlands region of the United States and Mexico, with emphasis on the area encompassed by Trans-Pecos Texas and north-central Mexico. The Center is committed to the recovery, protection, and sharing of this region's rich cultural legacy through dynamic programs involving research, education, public outreach, and publication.

Volume 30, 2020
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Publication Schedule

Trans-Pecos Archaeology Program

We are working hard to get some of our past projects published in various sources during the downtime provided by the pandemic. Upcoming in-house titles in our Trans-Pecos Archaeology Program publication series will include:

TAP #7: 2020 *Prehistory in the Calamity Creek Valley, Brewster County, Texas*—Erika S. Blecha and Robert J. Mallouf

TAP #8: 2021 *Rock Art and Archaeoastronomy in the Big Bend Region of Texas*—Roger Boren

TAP #9: 2021 *Black Rock Mortuary Cairn. Ritual, Identity, and Death in the Late Prehistory of Far West Texas*—Robert J. Mallouf and Erika S. Blecha

Occasional Papers Series

A Sampling of Archeological Resources in Big Bend National Park, Texas: 2021

David W. Keller, William A. Cloud, Samuel S. Cason, Robert W. Gray, Richard W. Walter, Thomas C. Alex, Roger D. Boren, Andrea J. Ohl, and Robert J. Mallouf, with contributions by Betty L. Alex, Ashley Baker, J. Phil Dering, David V. Hill, Dawnella Petrey, and Kathryn Puseman.

These titles will be available for purchase on our new website at <https://cbbs.sulross.edu/publications/>; prices may vary based on printing costs of the final books. Member discounts will apply.

We also have publications pending in outside scholarly journals and edited books that include:

Late Paleoindian Earth Ovens in the Texas Big Bend: 2021

Richard Walter and Bryon Schroeder

In Hot Rocks in Hot Places: 2021

Richard Walter and Bryon Schroeder. Edited by Charles Koenig and Myles Miller. University of Utah Press.

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Late Pleistocene Shasta Ground Sloth (*Xenarthra*) Dung, Diet, and Environment from the Sierra Vieja, Presidio County, Texas: 2020

Jim I. Mead, Bryon A. Schroeder, and Chad L. Yost. *The Texas Journal of Science*.
Spirit Eye Cave: Reestablishing Provenience of Trafficked Prehistoric Human Remains using a Composite Collection-Based Ancient DNA Approach: 2021

Bryon Schroeder, Tre Blohm and Meradeth H. Snow. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*.

PREHISTORY IN THE CALAMITY CREEK VALLEY BREWSTER COUNTY, TEXAS

Erika S. Blecha and Robert J. Mallouf

Edited by Susan Chisholm

Principal Investigator: Robert J. Mallouf
Texas Archaeology Program # 1201

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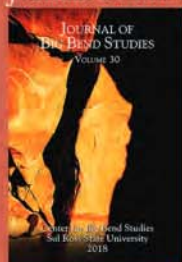
Ellen Sue Turner Memorial Fund

Ellen Sue Turner made many contributions to Texas archaeology, including tireless research of the many projectile point types (dart and arrow points) in the state. She continues to contribute to Texas archaeology through the Ellen Sue Turner Memorial Fund, which supports the salaries of our summer interns. Please visit our website (<https://cbbs.sulross.edu/ellen-sue-turner-fund/>) or call 432-837-8179 to learn more about the fund or to donate. Or use the CBBS newsletter store page to make your donation.

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A vintage black and white photograph of a family of six standing in front of a wooden building. On the left, a woman in a dark, long-sleeved dress and a large hat stands with her hands clasped. Next to her is a young girl in a light-colored dress. In the center, a young boy in a cap and overalls stands next to a smaller child. On the right, a man in a suit and a wide-brimmed hat holds a small child in a light-colored outfit. The text "Call for Papers" is overlaid in a large, yellow, serif font across the top left. Below it, "CBBS Annual Conference" is written in a similar yellow font. At the bottom, white text provides information about the 28th Annual Conference, scheduled for November 13 and 14, 2021, and asks for abstracts to be sent to cbbseditor@sulross.edu by the deadline of October 1, 2021.

Call for Papers

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The CBBS is accepting titles and abstracts for presentation slots at the 28th Annual Conference, scheduled for November 13 and 14, 2021. Please send abstracts with a short bio to cbbseditor@sulross.edu. Deadline: October 1, 2021