



Concho Valley Archeological Society Newsletter

March 2015

West Texas Heritage Day At Fort McKavett State Historic Site March 27th

Fort McKavett State Historic Site will come to life on March 27th as Living Historians from around the state gather to portray life as it would have been at the fort in the 1800s. Gates will open at 8:00 a.m. followed by a 10:00 a.m. flag raising ceremony.

Callan Clark is heading up a small group to represent CVAS during the event. Please contact him to help out.
Callan Clark clarkc74@gmail.com

Fort Chadbourne Texas Ranger Dedication

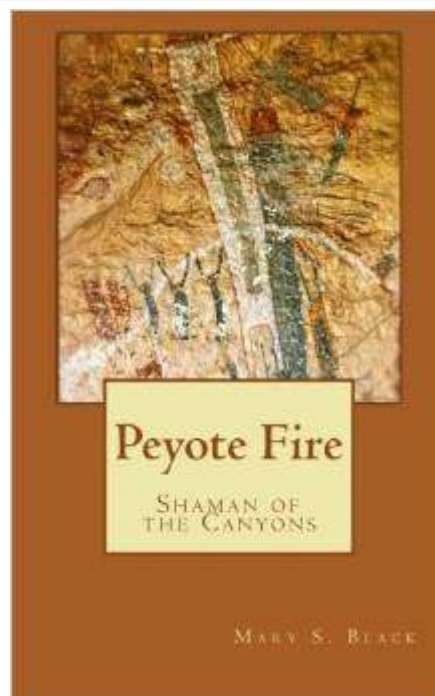
The Former Texas Rangers Association and the Ft. Chadbourne Foundation will be honoring Pvt. Benjamin Goodwin Warren with a cross dedication ceremony on **Saturday, March 21, 2015. The ceremony will take place at the Ft. Chadbourne Cemetery in Bronte, TX at 1:00 pm.** Please join us and the Ft. Chadbourne Foundation to honor this Ranger and his service to Texas.

"Private Benjamin Warren of Co. "E", Frontier Battalion was shot and killed on Feb. 10, 1885 in Sweetwater, Texas, in an attempt to keep him from testifying in a trial involving fence cutting."

March Speaker

CVAS is proud to present Mary Black for our March speaker. Mary recently published a novel about the Archaic Lower Pecos called ***Peyote Fire: Shaman of the Canyons***, which is currently available on Amazon.com. She will speak about writing prehistoric fiction and her discuss her process of going from wonder to published work. She will explain how she used archaeological, anthropological, and rock art research as the basis for a novel.

Four thousand years ago along the Rio Grande Deer Cloud is painting the stories of his gods in a small rockshelter in the canyon. When his influential grandfathers dies, Deer Cloud must finish the painting and undertake the ordeals of the wolf shrines to gain the power to lead his people. But the jealous shaman Stone Face will do anything, even kill, to stop Deer Cloud from reaching his goals. Deer Cloud must walk the narrow ledge between tradition and change. He must walk it without seeing, blind, as we often do in life. The female shaman Jumping Rabbit takes him under her wing and introduces him to the hallucinogenic peyote cactus, which brings the gods in glorious visions.



Epic Fire Marked ‘Beginning of the End’ for Ancient Culture of Cahokia, New Digs Suggest

westerndigs.org, by [Blake de Pastino](#) on September 16, 2013

Excavations in the Midwest have turned up evidence of a massive ancient fire that likely marked “the beginning of the end” for what was once America’s largest city, archaeologists say.

The digs took place in southern Illinois, just meters away from the interstate highways that carve their way through and around modern-day St. Louis. But 900 years ago, this was the heart of Greater Cahokia, a civilization whose trade routes and religious influence stretched from the Great Lakes to the Deep South, and whose culture shaped the lifeways of the Plains and Southern Indians.



An artist's rendering depicts Cahokia's city center at its prime (Painting by L. K. Townsend/Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site)

Here, researchers with the Illinois State Archaeological Survey have discovered a widespread layer of charcoal and burned artifacts among the foundations of ancient structures — evidence of a great and sudden conflagration that consumed perhaps as many as 100 buildings.

While there's only “circumstantial evidence” as to what caused the fire, the researchers say, what's even more striking is that the event seems to mark an ominous turning point in Cahokian culture.

The structures destroyed by the fire were never rebuilt, the excavations showed. Meanwhile, other large, important buildings, like distinctive ceremonial “lodges” or houses for local elites, stopped appearing altogether throughout the region. And soon after the fire, a great palisade wall went up around the nearby city center — known to archaeologists as Downtown Cahokia — most likely for protection.

“My colleagues and I believe that we have pinpointed a major turning point in ancient Cahokia's history,” writes Dr. Tim Pauketat, archaeologist at the University of Illinois, in a statement.

“We have found, we think, the beginning of the end of this American Indian city.”

Pauketat, author of *Cahokia: Ancient America's Great City on the Mississippi*, is also lead author of a paper describing the find in the *Journal of Field Archaeology*.

The end, in this case, began at a site known today as the East St. Louis precinct, a large walled compound some 10 kilometers from Downtown Cahokia that was likely the site of important civic and religious ceremonies.

During the culture's heyday, from about 1050 to the mid-12th century, East St. Louis was the second-largest ceremonial center in all of eastern North America — after Downtown Cahokia itself, which at its peak was home to as many as 10,000 people.

The compound included dozens of pole-and-thatch structures, along with a large leveled plaza, and at least two pyramids made of packed earth.

Inside some of the buildings, instead of the usual wares of daily life, the scientists found pigment stones, crystals, and “unusual” half-spheres made of fired red clay — items thought to be key to Cahokian rituals.

Many sites were also littered with uneaten corn, yet not enough to suggest that it was being stored there. Instead, Pauketat conjectures, it and other goods may have been put there in “token amounts,” as if made in offering. Radiocarbon dates of the charred remains place the fire at around 1170 CE, near the midpoint of Cahokia's century-long prime.

(continued on next page)

Epic Fire Marked ‘Beginning of the End’ for Ancient Culture of Cahokia, New Digs Suggest (continued from previous page)

Around this time, the culture’s political and religious tendrils ran for hundreds of kilometers in every direction, as did its trade routes, through which ideas were spread and ritual goods were obtained.

But decades’ worth of excavations all around Greater Cahokia have shown evidence of economic hard times and political strife in the 1100s that could have led to instability — even rebellion.

For its part, however, the research team suspects that the fire may have been set intentionally, by Cahokians themselves, for ritual purposes. It could have been done to commemorate the burial of elites possibly interred in a nearby mound, for instance, though this can never be confirmed since the mound was demolished by settlers in the 1870s. What’s more, soil layers above the burned ruins show that the sites were carefully cleaned and maintained after the fire — scorched earth and charcoal having been neatly swept in to fill the foundations.

After the fire, the team found, a handful of earthen pyramids were built in the East St. Louis precinct, but the construction of wooden structures stopped.

Meanwhile, they note, other excavations have found that building patterns in the farming communities surrounding East St. Louis also changed around this time, hinting at a major cultural shift.

“Before 1170, the East St. Louis site was heavily populated, and the Cahokians living there and across the Metro-East region were known for their special ... religious buildings or elite houses,” Pauketat writes.

“But after 1170, Cahokians stopped constructing these special buildings. At the same time, East St. Louis site was burned and emptied of its people. Only temple mounds were constructed at the site in later years, as if the place had become a ghost town, remembered and celebrated, but not lived in.”

And while the great wall erected in Downtown Cahokia has not been definitively dated, he adds, “presumably, that palisade wall was built either in anticipation of or in response to the events of 1170.”

From there, the team notes, other changes in material culture quickly began to manifest themselves all over Greater Cahokia — like new methods of making clothing and pottery, and even new visual symbols showing up on ceramic decorations — all part of a gradual but undeniable social reorganization.

In the end, Pauketat says, what caused the epic fire may be less important than the pivot point in history that it seems to mark.

In that way, the team’s excavations are more of a benchmark from which future research may resume, rather than a final answer to the riddle of Cahokia’s demise.

“While we don’t know yet why this all-important piece of Cahokia was burned,” he says, “we are beginning to piece together the puzzle of Cahokia by linking old and new excavations together.”



The foundation of one of the burned huts recently excavated in East St. Louis (Courtesy T. Pauketat)

HUNTER-GATHERER EARTH OVENS IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD: FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

Stephen L. Black and Alston V. Thoms

Editor's Note: This paper is one of the best studies I've ever read on burned rock middens. It has helped me understand quite a bit of what we found in Alan's Shelter and the other BRMs around Independence Creek. I've received permission from Steve Black to print extracts of the paper in monthly installments for our newsletter. I hope you find it as interesting and informative as I have. Tom

Cooking features archaeologists often call “hearths” are the most common and potentially informative features found at hunter-gatherer sites around the world, yet many are not hearths at all, and conceptualizing them as such undermines their research potential. Mischaracterized or not, hunter-gatherer cooking features help identify sites, living surfaces, and activity areas; they are used to evaluate depositional environment and integrity; they are prime sources of datable carbon and identifiable floral materials; and they provide important measures of landscape use that bear directly on basic subsistence practices, mobility, resource scheduling, feasting, gender, and population issues.

The term hearth is appropriately applied to relatively small surface features used for short term dry-heat cooking, arnith, and light that are ethnographically known from foraging societies worldwide. Although hearths would have been common in the systemic contexts that resulted in hunter-gatherer sites, most are invisible in many traces of their existence are ephemeral and do not survive the passage of time. In stark contrast, the telltale remains of the typically larger, more specialized, and longer-term cooking features appropriately known as “earth ovens” are readily apparent and commonly encountered by hunter-gatherer archaeologists, although often termed hearths. An earth oven is a layered cooking arrangement of fire, heated rocks (usually), food, green-plant packing materials, and sediment designed to bake food in moist heat at an even, relatively low temperature for periods of time ranging from a few hours to several days. Most of the layers, especially the namesake cap of earth, are rarely discernible in the archaeological record, but not so for the once-hot rocks. Globally for tens of thousands of years humans have baked foods in earth ovens using rocks to store and slowly release heat. In North America, evidence for this technology dates back to some 10,000 years ago (Leach et al. 2006; Thoms 2009). Thereafter, the Holocene archaeological record across much of the continent is littered, sometimes quite literally, with earth oven debris, most notably spent cooking stones typically termed burned or fire-cracked rocks (FCR).

Earth ovens are oft-reused cooking facilities with characteristic archaeological signatures, the most telling of which is often a circular arrangement .5–3 m in diameter of closely spaced, firecracked rocks that served as a heating element (i.e., thermal storage layer). Such relatively intact patterns are often found in association with scattered or amassed accumulations of highly fractured, discarded cooking stones. FCR alone give most earth oven facilities extraordinary archaeological visibility. Even when the primary structure is disrupted by pedoturbation and erosion, and after most organic constituents have long since weathered away, the rocks remain to signify the technology and behavioral pattern.

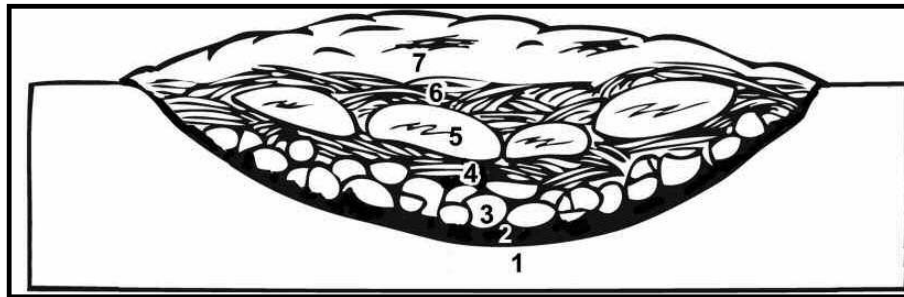


Figure 1. Idealized earth oven section diagram showing seven layers: (1) prepared surface (oven pit), (2) fire (reduced to ashes and glowing coals by the time the oven is sealed), (3) layer of red-hot rocks (heating element), (4) lower layer of green plant material (packing), (5) food layer, (6) upper layer of packing, and (7) earthen cap (adapted from Thoms 1989:268, Figure 21).

This article seeks to explain fundamental concepts necessary to recognize, understand, and effectively investigate earth ovens in the archaeological record. We argue that most closely spaced arrangements of heated stones, including many “hearth” features, as well as most substantial accumulations of spent cooking stones are manifestations of a single technology: earth oven cookery.

[Next month: Thermodynamics of Fires, Hearths, and Earth Ovens]

Fort Chadbourne Days Living History Event

May 1st & 2nd

CVAS has been invited to maintain a table of information and artifacts during the event. We need volunteers to be available to maintain the table and answer questions from the visitors. Please contact either Callan Clark or C.A. Maedgen or Tom Ashmore to put your name and time in for volunteering.

Callan Clark clarkc74@gmail.com
325-763-7361

C.A. Maedgen camaedgen@gmail.com
325-942-9854

Tom Ashmore tomashmore@wcc.net



Video Production for Fort Chadbourne

In addition to CVAS assisting in Fort Chadbourne's Living History Days, one of our members has offered to produce a special video to help get the word out for the event in the future. Tom Ashmore will use his aerial video production skills to put together a video of the activities during the weekend. He will be using both aerial drone and ground video recordings to produce a professional quality video that will include professional voice overs and soundtrack.

A voice over script has been coordinated with Lana Richards and early recordings will take place prior to the weekend and reenactors arrival. Tom promised to keep the drone activities to a minimum and as unobtrusive as possible so as to not to disturb the participants or take away from the historical atmosphere of the event.

When completed the video will be available on the Fort Chadbourne website.

SWFAS 2015

The Southwest Federation of Archeological Societies 2015 symposium is scheduled to be held in Hobbs, NM the weekend of April 25th. Tom Ashmore has responded to the call for papers. C.A. Maedgen will be representing CVAS at the board meeting. We plan on staying at an RV park. If anyone else is interested we can pass along the details.

2015 Dues

Please don't forget that annual dues are due this month. The new application form is on the back of this newsletter or you can pay at the meeting to our treasurer, Steven Schooler. The new address is on the application in this issue.

WE'RE ON THE WEB AT
CVASSANANGELO.ORG

Meeting Location

Please remember that our meetings are now in the classroom at the Fort Concho Living History Stables, **236 Henry O. Flipper St.** We enter through the side door.

2015 Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

Cell _____

Family members _____

132 Kilt Road San Angelo, TX 76901

Email _____

I pledge I will not intentionally violate the terms or conditions of any current or future state or local statute concerning cultural resources or engage in the practice of buying or selling artifacts for commercial purposes, or engage in the willful destruction of archeological data, or disregard proper archeological field techniques

Signature _____ Date _____

Individual	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student or military N/C		<input type="checkbox"/>

(active military only)

Mail to: CVAS, 132 Kilt Road, San Angelo, TX 76901