



Concho Valley Archeological Society Newsletter

May 2011

CVAS at Fort Chadbourne History Days

The Living History Days at Fort Chadbourne was held May 6th and 7th. The CVAS is not actively involved in an excavation at the Fort at this time so we only had an exhibit during the event. However, our great volunteers stepped up again to add the popular atlatl and bow & arrow event from our annual Archeology Days at Fort Concho for the kids visiting Fort Chadbourne too.

Larry Riemenschneider put together the photo exhibit consisting of two displays—one of the Butterfield Stage Station and one of the fort hospital excavations. We also had the reports of all the excavations on sale for visitors. All proceeds went to the Fort Chadbourne Foundation.

Although we had a sign up sheet for volunteers, many more showed up and helped than was on the sheet. So instead of trying to name off everyone and possibly leaving some people out, we would like to thank all who helped to make this another CVAS and Fort Chadbourne success. Of course, Garland Richards made the rounds Saturday afternoon and conveyed his thanks to everyone.



Larry Riemenschneider put together the photo display for the event

CVAS Meeting Presentation

The CVAS meeting will be held on 27 May at 7 p.m. at the Fort Concho Historic Stables classroom. This month Bill Yeates will give his presentation of the CVAS to the Rylander's Ranch on the Devil's River taken by CVAS and Iraan Archeological Society Members last month.



Camp Johnston—still looking

by Tom Ashmore

Collaboration is a great thing—especially in research amongst people with a deep-seated similar interest. That's what the search for Camp Johnston has turned into—a collaboration. We are still searching for the specific spot, but I think we are getting closer. When you are looking for a lost location that there is little documentation on, it ain't easy. After searching the area around Water Valley and coming up dry (so to speak), it was back to the drawing board. I passed my copy of the camp doctor's notes to Orville Shelburne, who happens to be a retired geologist. Some of the notes dealt with geologic formations of the hills within six miles of the camp. By studying the hills of the area and the descriptions, Orville was able to triangulate on a general area that he was pretty sure the doctor was at.

Around the same time, another member, Darrell Fischer, approached me. Darrell had been researching and reporting on Camp Johnston for years and was also trying to figure out the location. One thing Darrell had was a survey map of the Fisher Miller Colony of 1855. This was a survey of all the sections along the North Concho river. On that map there was a road that led up the North Concho, crossed the river in the area of what is now Carlsbad, did a loop and crossed back over the river to the north side. Why would a road do that in 1855? Could it be that it was related to Camp Johnston? I subsequently was able to find the trace of that road and it is exactly as shown in the survey. Darrell also passed to me the notes of George McClellan's route from Oak Creek to Camp Johnston in 1852 that I included in last month's and this month's newsletter. In those notes McClellan had documented his route by indicating time traveled and bearing for each leg and each day. It was easy enough to determine the times and the bearings, but the numbers for the bearings were not what you would expect on a normal compass. They seemed to be upside down and backward from a normal compass bearing. What I mean by this is in order for me to read his bearings I had to take a 360 degree drafting compass, make 360 degrees equate to due south and then flip the compass backward to read his bearings in the way he meant them—very strange.

I passed the notes to Orville for him to look at and Orville actually figured out what McClellan was doing. He was turning his compass backward when he was traveling south. He would point his compass due south (360 = south) and then turn his body in the direction he was going to go. Then he would read the number from the tail of the arrow instead of the point of the arrow. So we knew what he was doing, but why? Neither of us had ever heard of such a thing and research did not reveal this type of route annotation. It appears the purpose was to make it easier when redrawing his route on a map at a later time. If you use a straight edge off the compass while the 360 marker is pointing south, all you have to do is make the tail of the compass needle point to the number he previously annotated and draw his line off the straight edge. Ingenious!

So now we had his method and it was time to trace the route. At the end of the notes on the day he traveled to Camp Johnston he said they struck the road (along the North Concho) about 3 miles below the camp. Orville and I both tried working his route. Orville believed McClellan might have been taking into account the magnetic declination of the 1852 period and used that method. I used pure bearings as written. Originally I expected the route to generally follow the same route as the later Butterfield Trail. But it became apparent that was not the way they went.

After leaving Oak Creek the party headed south and passed just east of what is now Bronte. They continued on south, passing what is now called Mt Margaret (what McClellan called Sugarloaf Hill). They continued south, generally following what is now Highway 277, to the area of what is now the Goodyear Proving Grounds. Orville had them turning west about the area of the Proving Grounds entrance and I had them turning west slightly sooner (speed was one fact McClellan did not include). McClellan noted they camped at a spring before heading over the hills. We found a spring on both Orville's route and my route. The next day they headed west, over two sets of hills and then into an open flat. Our two routes paralleled each other by a couple of miles, eventually passing through the north end of the current town of Grape Creek. Then our routes came together in the crossing of Grape Creek. From there the route goes in a southwesterly direction to what is now highway 87. This is where he struck the road to Camp Johnston. If you go up the highway 3 miles from that point you end up at Carlsbad. This is the same location Orville deduced the location from the doctor's notes. This is also the same location Darrell had concluded for the location.

Orville and I have been in touch on an almost daily basis trying to figure this route out. In collaboration you have to be able to not take things personally and take critique with the respect that it is intended. I would send an idea to Orville and he would send back important points I had overlooked. He did the same with me and I was able to similarly highlight things he overlooked.

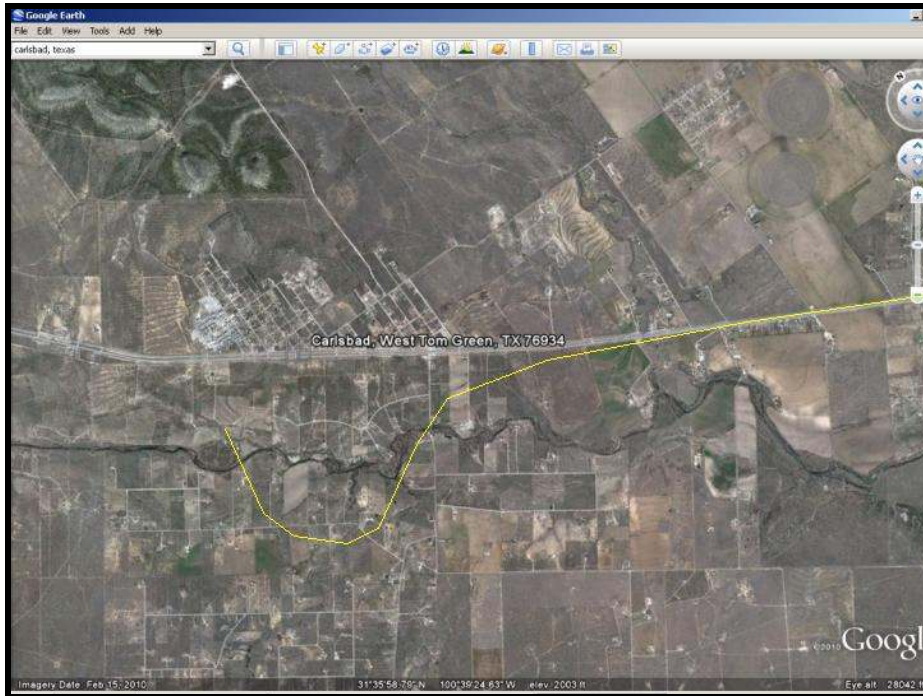
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Camp Johnston—still looking

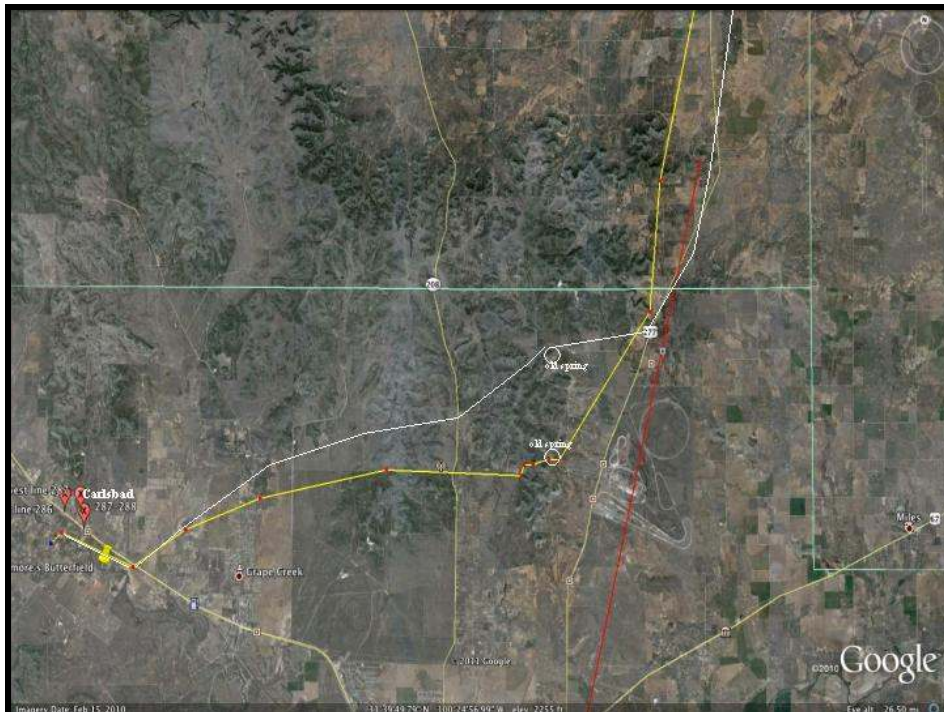
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The same went for Darrell. On one very important point Darrell brought to my attention that I was reading a piece of report that was from the Fort McKavett doctor and thinking it was from the Camp Johnston doctor (both reports were combined in an overall Army staff report). This was important because it kept both Orville and I from continuing down a path of investigation that was completely wrong.

So the search continues. We now are looking at the south side of the North Concho River across from Carlsbad. Unfortunately this area has numerous small 20—50 acre homesteads now. We are still trying to get the word out to landowners in the area who may have found evidence. Maybe we will get lucky and be contacted by one with a unique artifact to share.



Trace of old road crossing North Concho River in area of Carlsbad



Gen Smith/George B. McClellan route by Tom (white) and Orville (yellow)

Forensic science, archeology mix in Sam Houston Museum exhibit

By Tori Brock Staff Reporter , April 11, 2011, The Huntsville Item (itemonline.com)

HUNTSVILLE — Mix a little Texas history with crime scene investigation and throw in some archeology for good measure and you'll have a glimpse into what's going on at the Sam Houston Memorial Museum.

A new permanent exhibit opens Thursday night featuring never-before-seen artifacts from the San Jacinto Battlefield, the Bernardo Plantation, the San Jacinto surrender site and skulls excavated from the battlefield. "The Road to San Jacinto: History, Events, Archeology," opens at 5:30 p.m. at the museum, 1836 Sam Houston Ave.

Sandy Rogers with the museum said the exhibit focuses on the link between history and archeology.

"When you dig sometimes, history can change," Rogers said. "Archeology can prove or disprove things that you think happened. They're going to see lots of different stuff. There's something for everybody."

The exhibit opens as part of the 175th anniversary of Texas Independence. Amanda Danning, forensic artist and consultant with the Smithsonian Institute's Museum of Natural History, will be on hand to demonstrate facial reconstruction on one of five skulls of Mexican soldiers collected in 1837 by John James Audubon.

Audubon visited the San Jacinto battlefield where he collected the skulls and later donated them to Dr. George Morton's Cranial Collection in Pennsylvania. Medical models were made of the skulls. Danning has been working with the models.

"We're putting a face on one of the plebeians (commoners)," she said. "We know about Sam Houston. We know about Santa Anna. This is the first time we've ever had a look at what it was like for the Mexican soldiers."

Danning said each of the five skulls belonged to a battle-hardened veteran. Each showed previous battle wounds and deformities.

"They all have scars in the bone from previous battles they had healed from before they met their end at San Jacinto," Danning said. "Not only do you get to look at the face of someone who fought at San Jacinto, probably fought at the Alamo and certainly fought at some (other) type of battle — you're also going to get to see how much tougher people were back then."

Danning said learning about the battle of San Jacinto is exciting not only because of its place in Texas history, but also because of its importance to America as a whole.

"That battle was one of the most decisive military battles ever," she said. "It was 600 Texans against more than 1,200 Mexicans. There were over 600 Mexicans dead. It was one of the most incredible battles ever — in 18 minutes. That's pretty impressive."

Danning said anyone with an interest in the military, Texas history or CSI should find something to love about the new exhibit.

"We have some of the most interesting Texas history available and it's on the cutting edge," she said. "It's just now coming out of the ground. They're still doing the archeological dig. There's still a lot of digging to be done at the San Jacinto battlefield. If you're interested in Texas history, anthropology, archeology — we've got it all here."

Rogers said she was excited about the archeology going on at the Bernardo Plantation.

"We are the only museum anywhere that is displaying artifacts recently excavated from the Bernardo Plantation where Sam Houston camped on the way to San Jacinto," Rogers said. "We also have artifacts from the surrender site south of the battlefield. (The story of surrender) was always thought to be true, but archeology has proved it to be true."

The Bernardo Plantation was considered the largest and wealthiest cotton plantation in Mexican-owned Texas. Some of the artifacts on display include coins, door hardware and pieces of China dinnerware.

Rogers also wanted to stress how important it is for people to get involved in what's happening with the Texas Legislature. Some House Bills under consideration would do away with the Texas Historical Commission, which would stop all funding for these archeological digs.

"175 years after Texas Independence, and we're still fighting," she said.

McClellan Personal Notes

Last month I transcribed the hand-written notes of George B. McClellan, who was part of General C. F. Smith's party during his exploration and inspection tour when he visited Camp Johnston in 1852. This month I'd like to add his notes for their choosing Oak Creek as the location of Fort Chadbourne three days prior to the visit to Camp Johnston. They are copied directly out of a small personal notebook. A copy of these notes were provided to me by CVAS member Darrell Fischer during one of our meetings. I'd also like to thank CVAS member Orville Shelburne for his help and collaboration on these notes. [Tom Ashmore]

Friday 22-October

Rode up Oak Creek in search for a site for the post. Rode up on the west side of the creek as far as about 1 1/2 miles above Johnson's crossing—found two pretty sites. Crossed and found a very excellent position about 1/4m above J's crossing. Blazed two trees marking position of men's barracks at the foot of slope. Among oak trees—officers quarters to be on the top of the slope—level plateau behind—quarters face to S.E.—right flank close to water. Heavy body of timber behind. Winter camp to be on the left of the post in a ravine. Swam the creek in returning. Love this mule—



Raising the flag at Fort Chadbourne, 7 May 2011

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.

2011 Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

Cell _____

Family members _____

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 _____

Mail to: CVAS, 4801 Royal Oak Dr., San Angelo, TX 76904

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

(active military only)