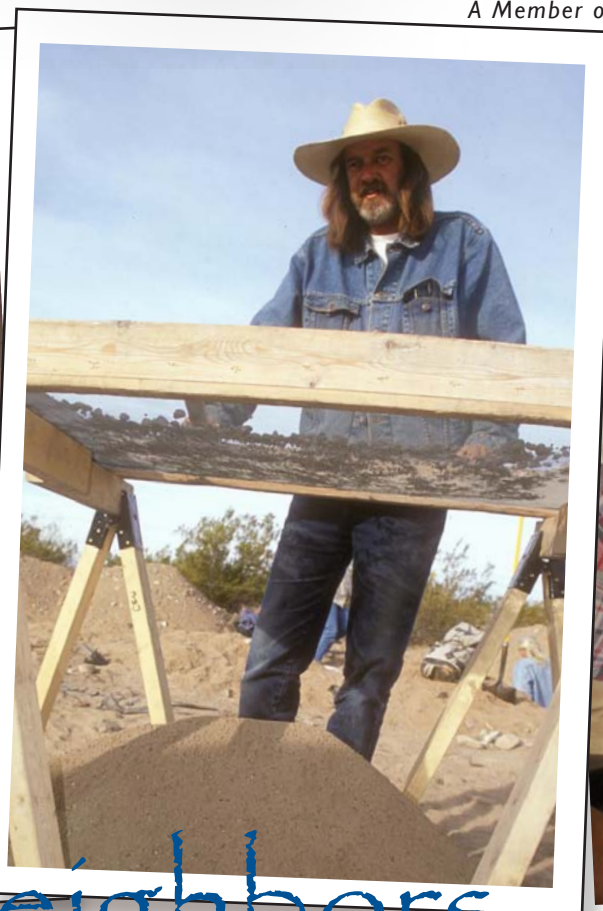


La Vista
de la

Frontera



Center for Big Bend Studies
Sul Ross State University
A Member of the Texas State University System
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Old Neighbors New Insights

Left to Right: Dr. Jennifer Piehl and Ashley Baker excavate a burial at the Millington Site; Richard Walter screens dirt from excavated units to glean tiny, loose artifacts; Bobby Gray maps an excavation unit. Photographs for this article by Jim Bones.

The cold morning air was dusty and smelled of wood smoke from nearby homes. Metal trowels clanged against burned rocks and gravel within the 200–800 year old deposits. The Millington site, located on the outskirts of Presidio, Texas, was grudgingly giving up secrets from its past. During the period of approximately 1200–1800 A.D., the Millington site flourished as a farming community and was exposed to the Spanish culture. Franciscan priests established a mission on the site, and locals engaged in both friendly relations and hostile encounters with nomadic Indian tribes, such as the Apache, Jumano, Comanche, and Tobosa. The archaeologists attempted to decipher these layered events as they were uncovered.

The Millington site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, became the property of the Texas Historical Commission in 1986, and was listed as a State Archeological Landmark in 1987. Although the state and federal designations have provided a degree of protection for most of the site over the years, adjacent areas were impacted by both city roads and a federally funded housing project. More severe damage occurred when several human interments were accidentally uncovered by a City of Presidio backhoe in 2003. This disturbance prompted the recent investigation that was funded by the Texas Preservation Trust Fund of the Texas Historical Commission, the City of Presidio, and the Trans-Pecos Archeological Program (TAP) of the Center for Big Bend Studies (CBBS).

The CBBS investigation, led by Staff Archaeologist Andy Cloud, concentrated on recovery of the human interments and partial excavation of three structural remnants damaged by the city backhoe. In addition, the site was mapped with a Total Data Station, and portions of it were subjected to geophysical analyses to identify subsurface features. For 23 days in winter 2006, up to 20 archaeologists and volunteers with the CBBS worked at the site.

Positioned near the confluence of the Rio Grande and Río Conchos, an area known historically as La Junta or La Junta de los Ríos, the Millington site was last explored by archaeologists over 65 years ago, a time when the discipline of archaeology was in its infancy. During that 1938–1939 investigation, 22 houses—mostly pithouses or *jacal* superstructures constructed in or over pits—were excavated by Donald Lehmer and J. Charles Kelley.

The early work at Millington and other nearby villages allows a glimpse of how the La Junta farmers were living in this extremely hot, arid setting. Kelley used these data to develop a cultural construct for the villages which he called the Bravo Valley aspect. Based primarily on differences in architecture and ceramics, he subdivided the aspect into the La Junta phase (ca. A.D. 1200–1450), the Concepcion phase (ca. A.D. 1450–1684), and the Conchos phase (ca. A.D. 1684–1760). The villages lie within a roughly triangular area formed by Cuchillo Parado, Chihuahua, and Ruidosa and Redford, Texas, which Kelley named the La Junta Archaeological District.

Although Kelley and Lehmer's efforts allowed an understanding of the La Junta villages in relation to coeval archaeological manifestations of the American Southwest and northern Mexico, and made real in-roads within architectural and ceramic studies, many

questions remain unanswered today, such as: *Who were these farmers and where had they come from? Were the economies of these people based predominantly on agricultural pursuits or were hunting and gathering lifeways still practiced year-round, seasonally, or during drought years? Were these people tethered in some manner to similar villages to the northwest or were they completely independent of such ties?*

Five burials without grave goods were documented, all excavated under the direct supervision of Dr. Jennifer Piehl, a CBBS physical anthropologist. An adolescent and two adult males had been buried in individual pits, an adult of indeterminate sex was placed within a midden, and an adult female was interred in the floor of a pithouse. Radiocarbon dates on bone collagen from three of the burials place them within Kelley's La Junta phase, with one date extending into the Concepcion phase. Various analyses of these remains, as well as of 12 individuals from previous excavations, have provided insights into the lifeways and hardships of these people.

The architectural remnants uncovered in 2006 represent three different types of structures. The easiest to decipher was a house constructed in a pit ca. 30 cm deep. It contained an adobe backing on the original ground surface, adjacent to and angled away from the pit—possibly a rainwater deflector. Its floor was hardened and made of puddled adobe several centimeters thick. CBBS archaeologists found this human interment covered with a loose cairn within a pit in the floor. A bone collagen date of A.D. 1160–1290 was obtained from the burial, effectively dating the pithouse to the early La Junta phase.

Part of another structure was uncovered in a 60–80 cm deep pit cut by one or more later pits. It lacked a prepared floor, but contained several burned vertical posts and roof fall, the latter including several layers of fibrous material (possibly grass), river cane, probable willow shoots, crisscrossed materials, and mud-dauber nests. Radiocarbon analysis of the roof fall provided a La Junta phase date of A.D. 1290–1410. It remains unknown whether this was a house or perhaps a ramada.

The third structural remnant was a partially collapsed rock wall over 1.6 meters long. The 40-cm-high wall was made principally of small vesicular basalt boulders. On either side of it were fallen stones, charcoal-laden sediments, and two large, untyped conjoined sherds from a shallow bowl with the interior painted with a red design. It was dated to A.D. 1730–1810, suggesting construction during or after the Conchos phase. Additional data will be needed





Above: Work was focused on the city backhoe trench, which ran the length of a residential street, where five human burials were recovered.

Left, top to bottom: Conjoined historic pottery sherds, belt buckle, possibly from the Spanish era; fragment of obsidian; net sinker stone which would have been attached to the bottom of a seining net to catch fish; historic pottery sherd; Perdiz arrow point, (A.D. 1250–1700); pottery sherd from Casas Grandes, major trade center of the Gran Chichimeca in what is now northern Chihuahua.

Right: Dr. Jennifer Piehl excavating an individual pit burial.

to determine what this wall represents since stone-based structures have not been previously reported from any of the villages.

The CBBS will continue work at Millington and other La Junta sites in the near future, with a focus on Spanish mission deposits. More dust will be caught in the winds that rake the landscape while our understanding of the Bravo Valley aspect slowly but steadily increases. The recent Millington site investigation not only revitalized research into the distinctive La Junta cultures, it allowed over 300 community members the chance to see for themselves the structures and burials that lay literally in their backyard. Many of these people, including the student body from the local high school, knew little about the site or its rich history. Several students asked “Where did these people go?” We told them “Look around you. Those people were assimilated by the Spanish and their bloodline survives today in many of your veins.”

-William A. Cloud

Brown Foundation, Inc.

As we continue to make enormous strides in the recovery and preservation of our region’s cultural legacy, we pause to reiterate our gratitude to the Brown Foundation, Inc. for its steadfast support of our Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program. This sustained research effort is critical to the reconstruction of our past, and its existence is contingent upon the visionary assistance of foundations and individuals.

Robert J. Mallouf
Director, CBBS

Thank You!



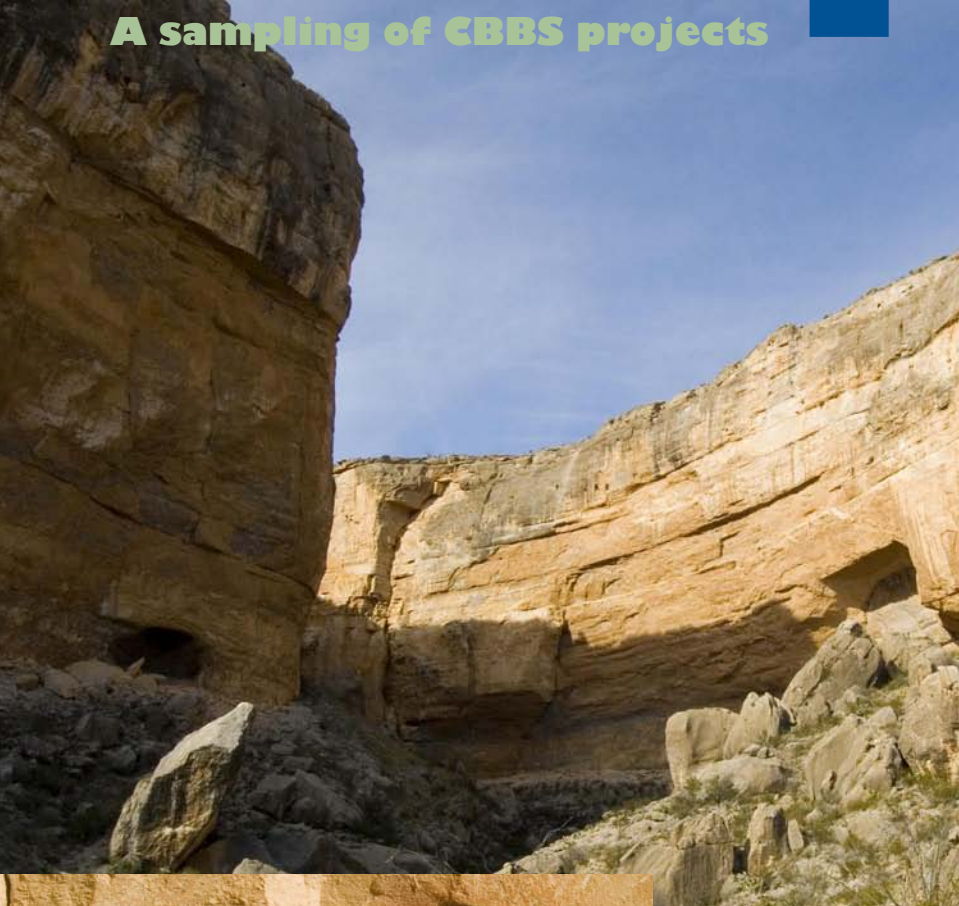
A major part of our Millington investigation was the excavation and analysis of five burials impacted by the city backhoe trench. We have also been granted the opportunity to examine individuals previously excavated from Millington and other La Junta sites by J. Charles Kelley and Donald Lehmer, and curated at the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas, Austin. These individuals open a window onto mortuary customs and health patterns in the Late Prehistoric village.

Most of the burials were placed within pits and marked with stones, often below house structures. Their bones show signs that life in these harsh surroundings was often difficult—there is evidence of anemia and childhood diseases. Traveling through the rugged topography caused pronounced arthritis in the spine, ankle and foot, and speaks of injuries and wear on joints. Males seem to have traveled more than females, as their arthritis patterns are concentrated in the lower extremities, while females show arthritis in the wrist, perhaps from food processing activities.

Our biggest surprise was the discovery, through chemical analysis and pathological patterning, that maize formed less than 25 percent of the Millington diet, which had a strong emphasis on gathered plants and terrestrial meat resources. Desert succulents, a staple in this region for hunting and gathering populations, were also not heavily utilized at Millington. Even though maize was available, Millington residents continued to rely on hunted and gathered staples used by populations in this area for centuries before the establishment of the La Junta villages. Following careful osteological analysis and the interpretation of mortuary patterns, the individuals that we recovered will be reburied at the site.

In the Field

A sampling of CBBS projects



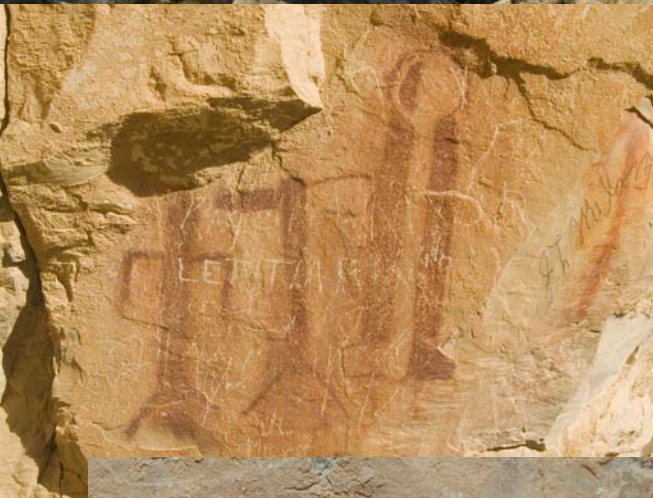
Bee Cave Canyon is a box canyon with a long open shelter beneath a high overhang and a stone tinaja at its end. The well-known rock art here had been described in earlier publications, but had never been formally recorded. During 2007, 12 volunteers produced detailed scale drawings of rock art in Bee Cave Canyon Shelter as a part of the CBBS Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program (TAP). Art was recorded along a 259-meter line for 185 square meters of the foreboding rock wall, much of which had never been recorded—or even noticed—until recorders took a good, close look at the rock. Many designs were faded or partially spalled off.

Near the main entrance to the shelter are large pictographs that were produced primarily in different shades of red. The pigment was applied as a liquid, and was probably made of the iron oxide that we call red ochre. Some of the art was beautifully executed, with excellent design and clean sharp edges, while other art was less carefully applied.

The remainder of the bluff contains smaller pictographs that are a mixture of liquid pigment that was probably applied using a hair brush and line art that looks like crayon. These lines were likely made by soft red and yellow ochre pebbles that are found in areas of the Black Hills directly across Chalk Draw from Bee Cave Canyon. The black lines are likely charcoal. Finding traces of pale “mint” green pigment at the site is also interesting. Green pigment is rare in Texas rock art.

Most of the pictographs are superimposed by scratches that are primarily random, as if the “scratcher” was determined to destroy, or at least leave his mark, on the original art. Occasionally there are recognizable symbols among the scratches and in one location there is a tiny exquisite etching of a leaf and in another there is a tiny anthropomorph. Of course there is also graffiti, left by twentieth-century visitors.

The larger, more colorful rock art panels attract most of the attention, but the smaller, faded rock art offers a more complete glimpse into the everyday life of the ancient inhabitants. We finished the documentation of the rock art on the bluff and the individual boulders in September 2007, and will complete work at a small cave entrance this winter.



Counterclockwise from above: Bee Cave Canyon, anthropomorphic pictographs with modern graffiti, petroglyph that appears to represent a leaf, cut marks of unknown purpose that occur in numerous places at Bee Cave.



Excavating Two Room Rockshelter

The Center for Big Bend Studies linked two fortuitous occurrences together, leading to the test excavation of Two Room Rockshelter, a large site on Pinto Canyon Ranch, Presidio County. First, the site was known to house a surprisingly large looter's pit—an all too common and unfortunate feature of many Big Bend shelters. Second, the *Midland Reporter Telegram* reported in 1960 that Paleoindian-aged dart points had been found in the shelter by a group of high school students. Together, these two facts gave the impression that the looter's pit at the shelter was the same hole dug by the students, wherein they found the projectiles.

The CBBS is committed to tracking down any evidence of Paleoindian (ca. 9500–6800 B.C.) activity in the Big Bend in order to fulfill a TAP research avenue. We revisited Two Room Rockshelter in hopes that some artifacts had remained after looting and school activities. What we found was quite surprising—we tried to re-excavate the extant looter's pit in hopes of locating the Paleoindian-aged strata, but we never hit bottom! What we did find was a rudimentary “staircase” dug into one of the rock-hard walls of the pit, as well as multiple impressions of a pick blade that were still evident decades later. We found no archaeological material in the pit. Closer inspection of the slopes below the shelter revealed bore holes for mining tests, and we ultimately sur-



mised that this very deep pit, dug into exceptionally hard “sediment,” was also a historic mining test.

Because prehistoric artifacts had been found on the shelter's floor, we knew the shelter held archaeological materials. Two additional test pits (1 m x 50 cm) were excavated in undisturbed areas to assess if Paleoindian materials were still to be found. Unfortunately, they were not. However, a fairly thick deposit dating minimally to the Late Prehistoric period (ca. 1200 A.D.) was uncovered during the test. These finds, though not what we were looking for initially, nonetheless underscore just how heavily the Pinto Canyon region was occupied during the latest phases of prehistory.

Gena and Benny Roberts, CBBS Volunteers of the Year, inside the mining test trench at Two Room Rockshelter. Benny, trowel in hand, is working to level the floor of one of our test units. The scar of the looter's pit mentioned in the Midland newspaper (the lighter sediment) is to Gena's right.

Giving Back: Benny and Gena Roberts

When you look up the word “volunteer” in the dictionary, you might see a picture of Benny and Gena Roberts. Unanimously chosen by CBBS staff to receive Volunteers of the Year award at the 14th annual banquet, they exemplify the spirit of hard work and discovery that the Center strives to capture in its day-to-day operations. They have driven from their home in Mississippi at the drop of a hat to work on sites all over the Big Bend, performing whatever tasks are necessary, no matter how meticulous or dusty.

“Benny and Gena are a joy. We look forward to having them join us at a site. They're willing to help. They get in there and work. They just jump right in. They do any job with a smile, and always have fun,” says Dawnella Petrey. They have also, in addition to their countless volunteer hours, donated to the Center and been awarded lifetime memberships.

Volunteers extraordinaire. Benny Roberts (right) screens for artifacts at the Millington site. Gena Roberts (below) organizes scale drawings at Bee Cave.



In the Community

CBBS staff go above and beyond



Clockwise from left: Our normal commute—hiking in to Wolf Den Cave; the commute in Austin for the SAAs; pebble from Jupiter Rockshelter, presented at the SAAs by John Seebach; rock art from Bee Cave, presented at the SAAs by Reeda Peel, the CBBS stretch of Adopt-A-Highway.

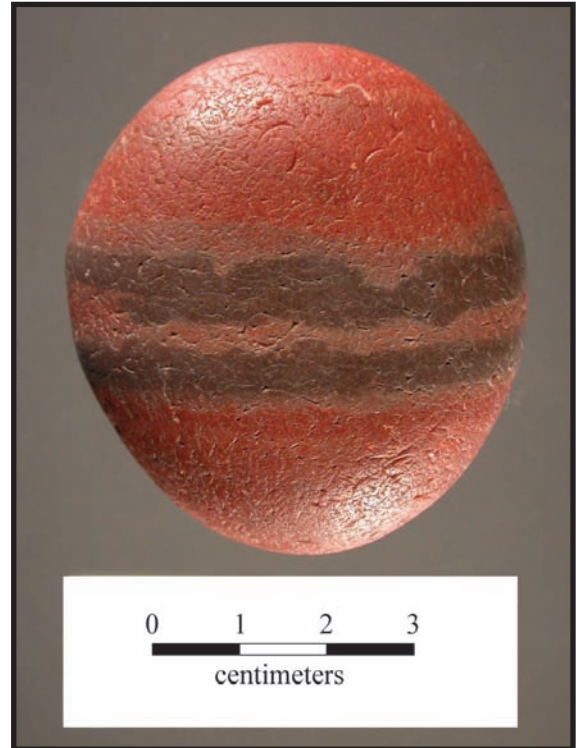
Archaeology Roadshow

Taking the *Big Bend* to the *Big City*

One early morning in late April, several archaeologists from the Center for Big Bend Studies piled our backpacks into the big red SRSU Suburban, not to head into the field, but to Austin to attend the national gathering of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA). Instead of wind-blown tents, we would spend the next four nights in climate-controlled hotel rooms. Instead of tramping through desert hills, we would tread the halls of the Austin Convention Center, choosing among more than 200 symposia on topics from archaeobotany to zooarchaeology, from Oaxaca to Texas, and from the First Americans to Spanish colonialists. The first SAA meeting held in Texas hosted nearly 4,000 archaeologists convening from all over the Americas to share their latest research—the second largest gathering in the 72-year history of SAA annual meetings.

Thursday evening, the CBBS team presented a symposium designed to bring CBBS research into the international limelight, entitled, “Río Grande to Rosillo Peak: Rediscovering the Archaeology of Texas’ Big Bend.” Andrea Ohl presented a paper co-written with Bob Mallouf about, “Gaining Insights into Archaic Lifeways of the Texas Big Bend.” Mary Melissa Williams illustrated recent work with Reeda Peel and Roger Boren in “Stone on Stone: A Newly Documented Rock Art Complex in Texas’ Big Bend.” William “Andy” Cloud presented a paper he co-wrote with Jennifer C. Piehl, “Revisiting La Junta de los Ríos: New Data from Archaeological and Human Osteological Investigations.” Dr. Stephen Mbutu, John Seebach, and Jason W. Bush also presented during the symposium. We also heard that a very well-respected Texas archaeologist described the CBBS symposium as “the best!” at the conference.

Friday afternoon, Bob Mallouf presented his paper on, “Indicators of Ritual Behavior in Rockshelters of the Davis Mountains” as part of a symposium on rituals in caves, rockshelters, and sinks. After delivering our papers, we were free to exchange information in earnest, long-winded, satisfying discussions with colleagues. The halls were filled with phrases to cheer an archaeologist’s professional heart, phrases such as: “social response to climatic change,” “cutmark analysis,” and “evi-





Photos from the CBBS included in the new Texas Beyond History La Junta exhibit. (left) Maltese cross design on a large red-on-brown La Junta-style wide-mouthed olla found along Bear Creek in eastern Brewster County. The design shows the influence of Spanish missionaries on La Junta peoples. (right) Historic photograph, ca. 1900-1910, that J. Charles Kelley labeled "La Junta type jacal structure with occupants, Redford area." This flat-roofed rectangular pithouse bears striking resemblance to those built seven centuries earlier in the La Junta phase.

dence from skeletal indicators."

The eight of us returned to Far West Texas excited by the enthusiastic reception of our work, exhausted by the many conversations with friends and fellow workers from past decades, and revitalized by the contact with archaeologists from all over the Americas.

Outreach in Midland

Two CBBS staffers took the long empty road through Coynosa to Midland to deliver talks to the Midland Archaeological Society this spring. On the evening of April 5, Jason Bush set up a PowerPoint at the Sibley Learning Center and described the Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program with photographs of CBBS work from the Davis Mountains to the Rio Grande, high up in Wolf Den Cave and down in the trenches at the Millington site in Presidio. A month later on May 3, Mary Melissa Williams took the group on a PowerPoint tour of the extraordinary rock art in the Black Hills of southern Brewster County.

CBBS Adopts a Highway

CBBS staffers literally took to the road—this time to do our annual cleanup of two miles of Highway 118 a few miles south of Alpine. Of course, we kept our eyes out for archaeological sites, but picked up only the expected assortment of bottles, cans and Styrofoam, as well as a railroad tie, a very dead skunk, and a cowgirl pin-up. Our orange vests blew in the wind, trucks zoomed past, and the afternoon flew by. We filled fifteen garbage bags of trash for TXDOT to pick up later that afternoon.

Teaching Texans about La Junta through the Internet

www.texasbeyondhistory.net/junta/

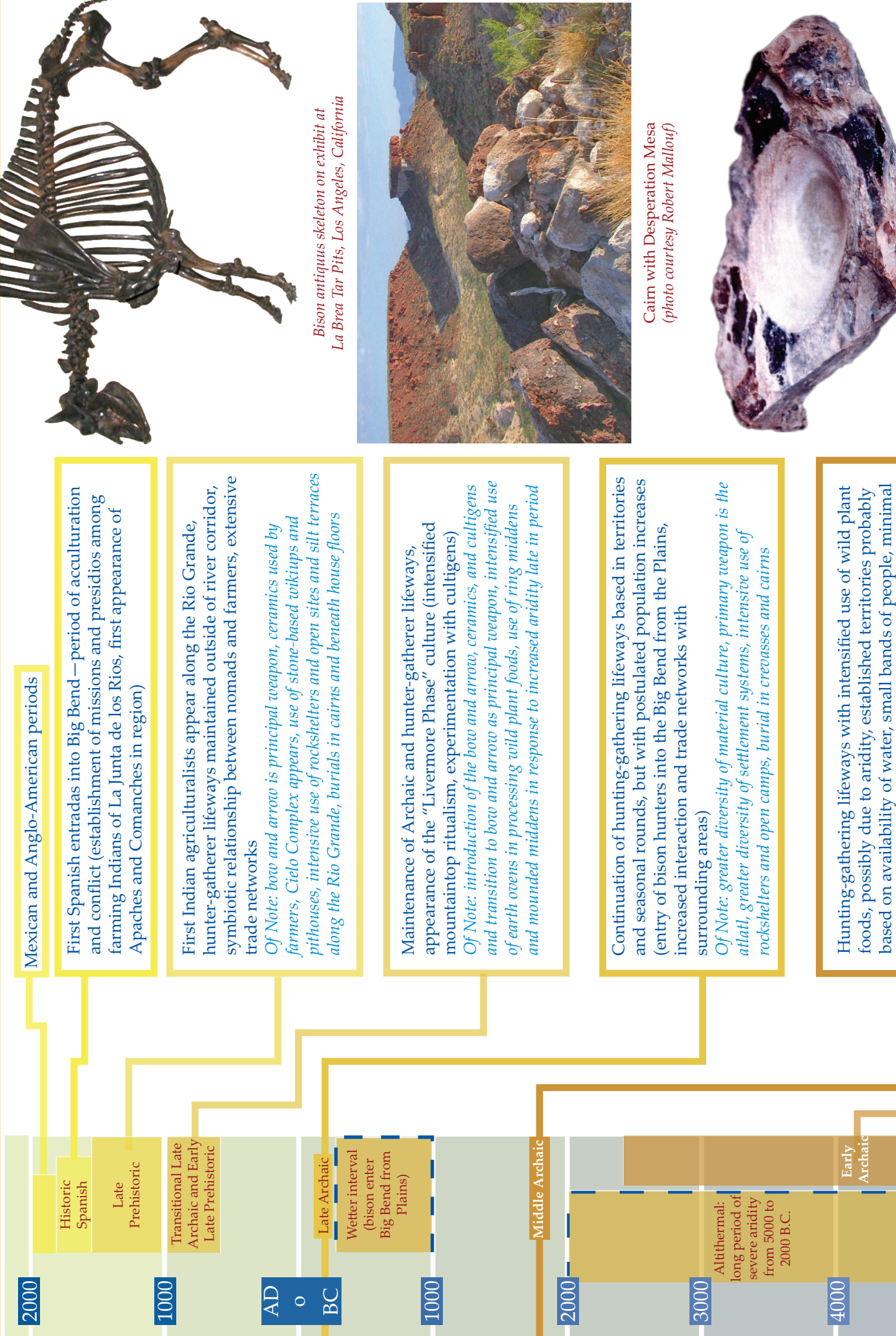
The CBBS helped to design a new exhibit for Texas Beyond History, the virtual museum of Texas' cultural heritage created by the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas at Austin in partnership with the Center for Big Bend Studies at Sul Ross State University and 15 other organizations. It is the first installment of the Trans-Pecos Mountains and Basins regional exhibit set.

The newest TBH partner organization, the Center for Big Bend Studies (CBBS) of Sul Ross State University, supported the exhibit in many ways as part of the ongoing Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program. William A. (Andy) Cloud, Steve Black and Jennifer Piehl are the primary authors of the exhibit. The La Junta exhibit was underwritten by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Texas Preservation Trust Fund (Texas Historical Commission), the Mitchell Family Foundation, and the Summerlee Foundation. Additional support was provided by E. Thomas Miller and other members of the Texas Archeological Society. Many of the images are from the CBBS Archives, and the Center gave permission to provide linked PDF files of numerous articles relating to La Junta that have been published in the *Journal of Big Bend Studies*.

This 12-section online exhibit focuses on the story and archaeology of La Junta, a little-known settlement center on the southeastern frontier of the American Southwest. Here at the modern towns of Presidio, Texas and Ojinaga, Chihuahua, the two largest rivers found within the vastness of the Chihuahuan Desert join one another in a confluence of a most precious resource—water. Around 800 years ago, village life was established within the three-pronged oasis formed by the juncture of the Rio Conchos and the Rio Grande. Throughout its long history La Junta has been a cultural junction, a crossroads for villagers and nomads, farmers and hunter-gatherers, traders and raiders, and Spanish colonists and native peoples.

Prehistory and History in the Big Bend

Text Robert Mallouf Design Avram Dumitrescu Center for Big Bend Studies, 2008



Mexican and Anglo-American periods

First Spanish entradas into Big Bend — period of acculturation and conflict (establishment of missions and presidios among farming Indians of La Junta de los Rios, first appearance of Apaches and Comanches in region)

First Indian agriculturalists appear along the Rio Grande, hunter-gatherer lifeways maintained outside of river corridor, symbiotic relationship between nomads and farmers, extensive trade networks
Of Note: bow and arrow is principal weapon, ceramics used by farmers, Cielo Complex appears, use of stone-based wickiups and pithouses, intensive use of rockshelters and open sites and silt terraces along the Rio Grande, burials in cairns and beneath house floors

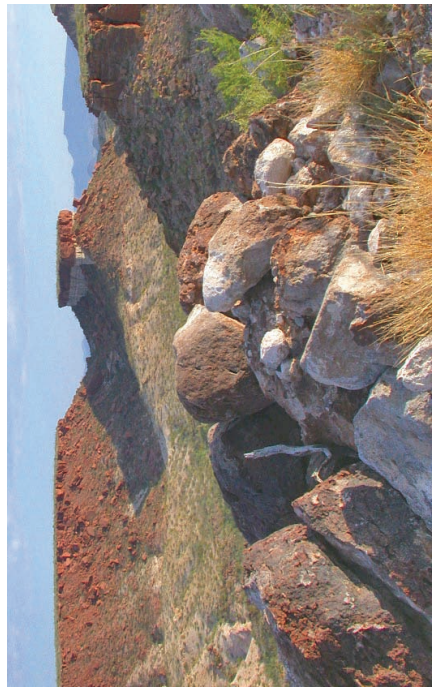
Maintenance of Archaic and hunter-gatherer lifeways, appearance of the “Livermore Phase” culture (intensified mountaintop ritualism, experimentation with cultigens)
Of Note: introduction of the bow and arrow, ceramics, and cultigens and transition to bow and arrow as principal weapon, intensified use of earth ovens in processing wild plant foods, use of ring middens and mounded middens in response to increased aridity late in period

Continuation of hunting-gathering lifeways based in territories and seasonal rounds, but with postulated population increases (entry of bison hunters into the Big Bend from the Plains, increased interaction and trade networks with surrounding areas)
Of Note: greater diversity of material culture, primary weapon is the atlatl, greater diversity of settlement systems, intensive use of rockshelters and open camps, burial in crevasses and cairns

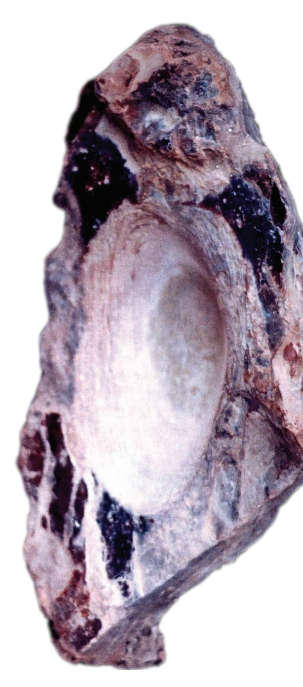
Hunting-gathering lifeways with intensified use of wild plant foods, possibly due to aridity, established territories probably based on availability of water, small bands of people, minimal



Bison antiquus skeleton on exhibit at La Brea Tar Pits, Los Angeles, California



Cairn with Desperation Mesa (photo courtesy Robert Mallouf)



interaction with other regions

Of Note: primary weapon is the atlatl, frequent and sometimes intensive use of rockshelters as well as open campsites along arroyos and on mountaintops, use of rock-lined ovens for processing some plant foods

Hunting-gathering lifeways, but within more restricted geographical ranges, stronger emphasis on plant collecting along with hunting

Of Note: toolkits include grindstones such as metates and manos for processing plant foods, primary weapon is the atlatl, first concentrated use of rockshelters for habitation, as well as open campsites at springs and along arroyo systems, campsites occur throughout the region, but are now frequently deeply buried by alluvium

Includes several cultural groups, adaptations to drier environmental conditions and changing plant and animal communities

Of Note: found throughout the Big Bend, mobile hunter-gatherers' primary weapon was the thrusting spear and/or atlatl, stone tools became more diversified, known campsites are scarce

(Folsom) Highly mobile big-game hunters whose primary prey was giant bison, ranged widely following herd animals
Of Note: primary weapon was the thrusting spear and/or atlatl, artifacts are found across big Bend, only one known campsite in Lobo Valley area near Van Horn, Texas

(Clovis) Nomadic people who lived in small bands and were highly mobile, hunted mammoth, camel, giant bison and other terminal Pleistocene animals, and gathered and processed wild plants and a range of small mammals, birds, and amphibians

Of Note: Clovis artifacts are found in Brewster County, primary weapon was the thrusting spear and/or atlatl, their campsites and kill sites have yet to be discovered in the Big Bend!

5000

6000

7000

8000

Early
Paleoindian
(Folsom Culture)

9000

Early
Paleoindian
(Clovis Culture)

10,000

Pre-Clovis
(not substantiated)

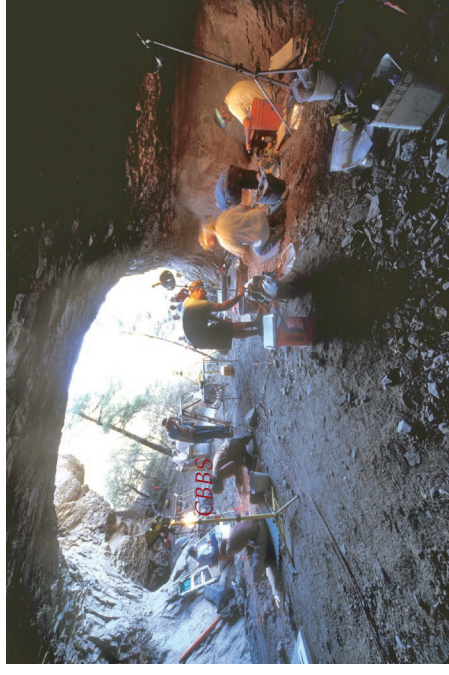
11,000

12,000

Late
Paleoindian

Metate

(photo courtesy John F. Fort)



Interior of Wolf Den rockshelter
(photo courtesy Jimmy Jalapeño)



Folsom projectile
(photo courtesy John D. Seebach)



Cielo Complex Wikipup
(photo courtesy Robert Mallouf)

Supporting Discovery in West Texas *Thank You!*

The CBBS staff and Advisory Council extend the sincerest gratitude to the following individuals, organizations, and foundations that have provided the additional funding necessary to support our research efforts. Your contributions make it possible for us to carry out our mission to achieve excellence in research and education, and spread the news of discovery in the Big Bend region of Texas. Note: There have been some staff changes at the Center this year, and if your name has been inadvertently left off this list, please contact Susan Chisholm at 432/837-8179 so we can be sure to include you in our next publication. Thank you.

Dick Bartlett
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Teresa Weedin
Tom Ward
Regge Wiseman

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J. Travis Roberts Jr., Chair
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Homer Mills
Kathleen Olsen
Ike Roberts
Lonn Taylor
Hester Ann White

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As an opportunity to further support research, discovery, and education in the Big Bend, we are pleased to offer Center for Big Bend Studies Lifetime Memberships. Memberships are available for a single donation of \$1000 or more. Contact Susan Chisholm, 432/837-8179 or cbbs@sulross.edu, for more information.

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- ∞ A 50% discount on books from the CBBS publications series.
- ∞ Free CBBS Conference registration for the member and a guest.
- ∞ A 10% discount on purchases made at the Museum of the Big Bend.
- ∞ A framed lifetime membership certificate.

The Indispensable

Digging Stick

As a child, do you remember the satisfaction of shaving and sharpening a big stick with your first pocketknife? It seemed like the natural thing to do, right? And think of all the tasks that you were able to carry out with that first pointed stick! In fact, you probably held on to it for quite awhile—perhaps keeping it handy in your parents’ garage or in the corner of your bedroom. As an adult, you might still have that old stick, or you might even have made another one just recently.

The simple stick has been a basic, essential implement of humanity for millennia. While the oldest surviving tools in the archaeological record are made of stone, it is quite likely their use was preceded in time by the stick as a tool for digging and fighting. Just as chimpanzees use sticks for aggression and for exploring termite mounds today, it is likely that our Hominid ancestors realized the utility of a stick—particularly one with a tapered end.

The term “digging stick” is applied by archaeologists and anthropologists to a variety of wooden implements used prehistorically and historically by cultures worldwide to dig roots and tubers, retrieve burrowing animals, or to prepare the ground for planting seeds. The digging stick typically consisted of a simple, sturdy stick that had been shaped and/or sharpened, often with a fire-hardened tip. Digging sticks were usually of one-piece construction, although some cultures prepared composite tools with the addition of antler handles, footrests, or other configurations.

Among hunting-gathering, foraging, and farming cultures, the digging stick was considered an essential tool for carrying out the tasks of everyday life. Even the highly mobile Aborigines of central Australia and Bushmen of South Africa, considered by anthropologists to be “world champion light travelers,” invariably included digging sticks in their nominal, 20–50 lb. baggage loads. Often considered to be a gendered tool among nomadic peoples, they commonly were fashioned and used by women who would also wield them as clubs to dispatch small animals, and as stabbing and

cutting weapons, if necessary.

The oldest known digging sticks in the Western Hemisphere date from about 12,500 years ago and are from the South American site of Monte Verde in Chile. Digging sticks were a common tool of most North American cultures, and are noted ethnographically, for example, among Indians of the Plains, Northwest Coast, Great Basin, and Southwest into Mexico. They are found in both Archaic and Late Prehistoric archaeological assemblages of the greater Southwestern United States, where they are sometimes preserved in dry, protected cave and rockshelter deposits.

One of the best examples of a prehistoric digging stick yet encountered comes to us from the Big Bend of Texas. Found inside a small rockshelter in southern Presidio County, this hardwood artifact is remarkable for its exceptional state of preservation. Of single-piece construction, this slightly curvilinear specimen is 81 cm long, has a maximum diameter of about 3 cm, and appears to be fashioned from the peeled limb of an osage orange (*Maclura pomifera*) or mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) tree. The upper end of the stick angles to form a crutch-like handle, while the lower, or working end has been ground to a sharp point. The shaft is smooth and polished from handling, and the sharpened tip exhibits evidence of wear.

Direct evidence for the prehistoric use of digging sticks in the Big Bend has most recently come to light at the Arroyo de la Presa archaeological site—also in Presidio County. Careful scientific excavations by the CBBS there in 2001 yielded pointed digging stick impressions on the bottom and sides of a pit that had been constructed sometime between A.D. 1400–1650. Digging sticks were employed through time for this and innumerable other tasks by ancient and historic populations in the Big Bend.

Continued on pg. 14

Right: Digging stick found in the Big Bend that measures 81 cm long and 3 cm in diameter.

Above: Close-up of crutch handle on digging stick.



Kelley Museum Dedicated in Zacatecas

On October 30, 2007 outside the rural village of Chalchihuites in Zacatecas, Mexico, a crowd of over 300 people gathered to dedicate a new museum and visitors' center at the archaeological ceremonial center of Alta Vista. The group included the Governor of Zacatecas and several dignitaries from Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. The museum is an adobe-style multi-purpose facility. It includes the Manuel Gamio Auditorium, named after the Mexican archaeologist who undertook limited exploratory excavation at the Alta Vista site in 1908, and the J. Charles Kelley and Ellen Abbott Kelley Museum, in honor of the Kelleys' extensive excavations and development of the site in more recent years. Ellen Kelley made the two-day drive from Texas to Zacatecas to attend the dedication with three relatives, including J. Charles' son, Kevin Kelley. Andrea Ohl, an archaeologist from the Center for Big Bend Studies, also traveled with the group.

The ceremonies for the dedication of the visitors' center included a program in the Manuel Gamio Auditorium with speeches by various dignitaries who recognized the work that the Kelleys accomplished and that the INAH archaeologists are continuing. They also stressed the importance of this northern Mexican site in its relationship and impact on the development of Mesoamerican Culture farther to the south. The ribbon was cut for the Museum and Ellen Kelley stepped over the threshold to lead the viewing. Later at a banquet dinner in Chalchihuites, Lic. Amalia García Medina, Gobernadora of the State of Zacatecas, presented Ellen with a ceramic statuette and again spoke of Ellen's particular contribution to the prehistory of northern Mexico, the Chalchihuites Culture, and Alta Vista.

J. Charles and Ellen Kelley carried on professional, full-scale excavations at the Alta Vista site under the auspices of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, the National Science Foundation, and under permission and assistance from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia from 1971–1995. Through their efforts, the site came to be recognized not only as an important ceremonial center of the Mesoamerican Chalchihuites culture, but also as an astronomical observatory located on the Tropic of Cancer and dedicated to the observance of the movements of the sun across the Sierra de los Reyes mountain range to the east.

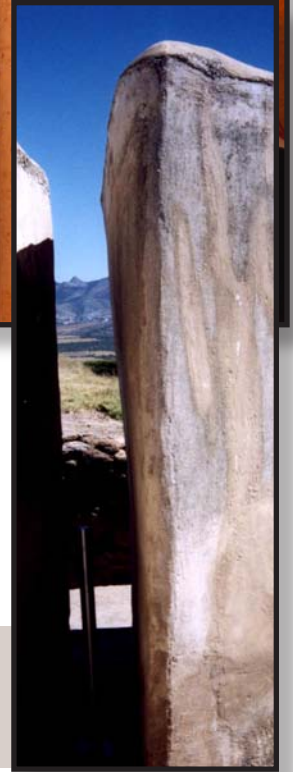
The Alta Vista site dates from about 400 A.D. to approximately 1150 A.D. The Hall



of Columns adjoins a large court/platform structure with a three-temple complex (including a pyramid and crypt containing multiple high-status burials with grave goods) on the northwest. An elaborate complex known as the Labyrinth with its gnomes aligns with the sun in various positions throughout the

Continued on page 14

Above: Dr. J. Charles Kelley and Ellen Abbott Kelley Museum entrance with Alta Vista informational stele. Right: The Labyrinth gnomes that frames the summer sunrise over the Cerro Picacho.



Mallouf Receives Truett Latimer Award from Preservation Texas



Mallouf at work in the field, examining the backhoe trench at the Millington site in Presidio, Texas.

Robert J. Mallouf, Director of the Center for Big Bend Studies, received the Truett Latimer Award for Historic Preservation on April 13, 2007 in Lakeway, Texas. A non-profit organization that honors individuals, government officials, businesses, organizations and news media that have made significant contributions to preservation efforts in Texas, Preservation Texas recognized Mallouf as part of its twenty-first annual Honor Awards program.

The Truett Latimer Award, named for Texas' first State Historic Preservation Officer and executive director of the Texas Historical Commission, is given annually to one working professional who demonstrates a significant commitment and sustained involvement to preservation as part of their job responsibilities. The organization recognized his many years of service as Texas State Archeologist and his implementation of the ambitious CBBS Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program.

Welcome Aboard! New CBBS Staff



Susan Chisholm *Administrative Assistant*

Susan has been hired as the new CBBS administrative assistant. Her duties include planning and preparation for the Annual Conference and board meetings, as well as daily upkeep of all administrative tasks related to the daily operations of the CBBS office. She graduated from the Katherine Gibbs Secretarial School in Providence, Rhode Island, and has thirty-eight years of experience in secretarial and administrative work. She has worked in legal offices, a psychologist's office, a hospital, and even a sleep lab. A woman of many talents, Susan is also an actress with twenty years' experience in petite theater. She and her husband, Clay, have moved to Alpine after living in Louisiana for thirty years.



Avram Dumitrescu *Scientific Illustrator*

Avram is a professional visual and graphic artist from Belfast, Ireland, who currently resides in Alpine, Texas. He earned his M.A. in Applied Arts and a B.A. in Visual Communication from the University of Ulster at Belfast, and has worked as an artist and illustrator. He teaches courses in graphic and web design at Sul Ross State University. His artwork has been published in the *Southern Review*, *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, the *Desert Candle*, and the *Ulster Tatler*. He has also illustrated a book about the food writer M.F.K. Fisher, which will be published in summer 2008 by the University of California Press. He has joined the CBBS as the scientific illustrator, and will be applying his skills and talents in the production of superb drawings of artifacts, site plans, and maps for CBBS publications. The timeline in the center of this issue is his debut with the CBBS.



Reeda Peel *Rock Art Specialist*

Reeda has worked with the CBBS for years as a contractual rock art specialist, and we are pleased to announce her change in status to full-time employee. She will be coordinating the creation of a comprehensive digital rock art database. Following the model of Forrest Kirkland, Reeda Peel has applied her professional training and experience in fine art to the recording of Native American rock art. Since 1990, Peel has worked with the Texas Archeological Society, served as a Texas Historical Commission Archeological Steward, and participated in archaeological projects with universities as well as state and federal agencies. In her work with the Center for Big Bend Studies, she has been documenting rock art in the Chinati Mountains, Bee Cave Canyon, and in the Graef Site near Balmorhea.

New Members of the CBBS Advisory Council

The CBBS would like to thank its newest Advisory Council members for volunteering their time and expertise to support the Center in its mission of research, discovery, and education.

Jed Becker

Jed moved with his family to El Paso, Texas in 1959 and later attended Sul Ross State University in Alpine. He has been involved in the telecommunications and agriculture industries for over 35 years. He serves as a board member of the El Paso County Historical Society and Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Wildlife Committee. He has been married to Kay Jones Becker for 36 years and has two daughters—Melinda Skillern and Jessica Saab.

William Wright

Bill Wright is a Texas photographer whose work appears in many public and private collections including the British Library in London, the Smithsonian Institute and the National Museum of American Art in Washington, and the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin. He is also the former CEO of Western Marketing, Inc. an author, and a dedicated civic worker.



La Vista de la Frontera is the annual newsletter of the Center for Big Bend Studies at Sul Ross State University. Address correspondence to the Editor, Center for Big Bend Studies, Box C-72, Alpine, TX 79832, or ecaro@sulross.edu.

Editing and graphic design by Erin Caro.

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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.

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Rocks and Artists: A Panoramic View of Texas Rock Art Texas Archeological Society Rock Art Academy 2008

Van Horn, Texas
February 29–March 2, 2008

A combination of classroom discussions and field tours led by the Center for Big Bend Studies, Sul Ross State University, will introduce participants to the amazing variety and extent of rock art in far West Texas.

A Saturday morning field tour will explore the petroglyphs of Lobo Valley, and Saturday afternoon's tour will visit the rock art and dynamic Precambrian stone formations of nearby Red Rock Ranch. Participants should be in good physical health and able to walk over very rough terrain.

Registration includes two guided field tours, classroom discussions, catered lunches on Saturday and Sunday, morning coffee, and afternoon snacks. \$95 for members of the Texas Archeological Society; \$135 for non-members includes membership in the Texas Archeological Society.

Digging Stick, Continued from pg. 11

While not recovered scientifically, the location and presumed context of the digging stick suggests a Late Prehistoric or Protohistoric (A.D. 700–1700) hunter-gatherer affinity for this artifact. Fortunately, realizing the significance of their discovery, the finders donated the specimen to the Center for Big Bend Studies, where it was documented and then transferred to the Museum of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, for permanent curation and use in future educational exhibits.

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Laurie and Scott Baker of Pensacola, Florida, discoverers of the Presidio County digging stick, and to Dr. Michael Powell, Sul Ross State University, for wood identification.

-Robert J. Mallouf

Kelley Museum Dedication, Continued from page 12

solar calendar year. The gnomon receives a shaft of light when the sun rises over the prominent pinnacle of Cerro Picacho in the Sierra de los Reyes which lies to the east and overlooks the village of Chalchihuites. The site includes excavated courts with altars, platforms, rooms with fire-pits, drains, banquettes, stairways, and other Mesoamerican traits. Excavation at the site continues with stabilization and maintenance by professional archaeologists from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, who are carrying on the work they began with the Kelleys in the 1970s.

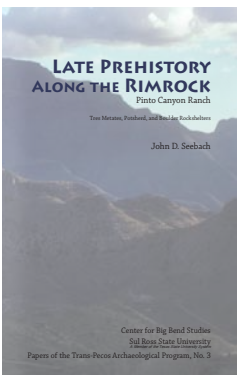
The Museum includes many of the unique artifacts recovered by the Kelleys, interpretive dioramas, and two audio-visual productions. These are state-of-the-art representations of the interplay of the sun with Cerro Picacho and the Labyrinth. Also demonstrated were regional connections between Alta Vista and other important sites in northern Mexico and to cultures in the Valley of Mexico and the southwest United States. There is also a nicely stocked Museum Gift Shop where authorized replicas of ceramic vessels, figurines, and other objects may be purchased. The Museum complex also includes offices, bathroom facilities, additional work space, and plans for future expansion.

CBBS Store: books and gear

Support Discovery in West Texas: CBBS Lifetime Membership

By contributing to the CBBS endowment fund through a lifetime membership, you are providing the support necessary for the Center to continue its unique work in discovery and documentation of West Texas history and culture. Benefits of membership include complimentary copies of the *Journal of Big Bend Studies* and *La Vista de la Frontera* newsletter, a 50% discount on other publications, free conference registration for you and a guest, and more. Contact Susan Chisholm at 432/837-8179, or cbbs@sulross.edu, for more details.

New TAP Publication: Late Prehistory Along the Rimrock



Papers of the Trans-Pecos Archaeological Program, Number 3, John Seebach

The CBBS excavated three rockshelters on Pinto Canyon Ranch in Presidio County in 2004. Each of these shelters contained evidence of Late Prehistoric occupation, from a general use campsite where plant foods were processed to a lookout where weapons were finished and game processed. This report catalogs the archaeologists' discoveries and explores their significance.

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