



New Mexico Archaeology

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO FOUNDATION

WWW.NMARCHAEOLOGY.ORG

FEBRUARY 2025

DEFINING OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STATE'S DESCENDANT COMMUNITIES

JOHN TAYLOR-MONTOYA
OAS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In archaeology, anthropology, and museum circles these days you may find the term “descendant community” used frequently in conversation and literature. What exactly does it mean? It is clearly an umbrella term. In my own experience, it seems that many archaeologists in the Southwest use the term to refer to the many Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations indigenous to the region. I would agree with my colleagues, and offer that the term has a much broader application. If you were to search the Internet, you would find that the term is used to describe a range of communities. One definition that I encountered resonated with me—it is from the Haffenreffer Museum at Brown:

“...we curate a global collection, which means the objects...originate from communities in North America, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Oceania... we have a responsibility to be a good partner to the communities whose objects we care for. A ‘Descendant Community’ can be many things: a Tribal Nation, an organization

See **Director**, on Page 6.

GEORGE MCJUNKIN BEYOND FOLSOM



George McJunkin, seen here in an image at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, was checking fences near Folsom, NM, when he found a pile of bison bones. The rest is history.

JOHN TAYLOR-MONTOYA
OAS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It was not that long ago that a search for source material on George McJunkin would have yielded only a few results. A quick Google search now yields dozens of hits complete with references to books, articles, videos, blogs, and a Wikipedia entry. If you’re interested in North American archaeology, you have probably heard his name associated with the Folsom Paleoindian site in northeast New Mexico. McJunkin certainly deserves the recognition but with so much material already available, I was hesitant to devote the time to write about him. After all, what could I possibly contribute that wasn’t already out

there? I certainly did not want to repeat the same narrative one more time.

But while I was doing research for this piece, I realized that there were some aspects of the story that should be retold, some aspects of his life that should be re-emphasized, and a small twist in the story that brings it home.

Every student of North American archaeology has been told that the discovery of the Folsom site began when a Black cowboy named George McJunkin noticed bison bones sticking out of an arroyo after a storm. While that statement is nominally true, the irony is that the storm occurred in the summer of 1908, and excavations did not begin until 18 years

See **George**, on Page 7.



CULTURE DAY AT THE ROUNDHOUSE

The New Mexico Office of Archaeological Studies' display tables made for a popular stop at this year's Culture Day, which took place Monday, February 24, at the Roundhouse in Santa Fe. Culture Day is one of many events held in the State Capitol during New Mexico's Legislative Session.

Also present at this year's event were representatives from the State Library, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, the Museum of International Folk Art, NM

Historic Sites, the New Mexico History Museum, the New Mexico Museum of Art, the NM Museum of Space History, the Museum of Natural History & Science, the NM Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum, and the National Hispanic Cultural Center, among others.

Visitors to the OAS table received information about pre-colonial and historic period arts and crafts, handled our array of replica pieces, and posed for a few photos, which were taken by Melissa Martinez.



Office of Archaeological Studies

The Office of Archaeological Studies (OAS) was the first museum program of its kind in the nation. OAS staff conduct international field and laboratory research, offer educational opportunities for school groups and civic organizations, and work to preserve, protect, and interpret prehistoric and historic sites throughout New Mexico.

Friends of Archaeology

The Friends of Archaeology is an interest group within the Museum of New Mexico Foundation that supports the OAS. To join the FOA, you need only become a member of the Museum of New Mexico Foundation and sign up. Visit www.nmarchaeology.org for information. We're also on Facebook, at www.Facebook.com/FriendsOfArchaeologyNM. Our e-mail address is: Friendsofarchaeologynm@gmail.com

Mission Statement

The mission of the Friends of Archaeology is to support the Office of Archaeological Studies in the achievement of its archaeological services mandate from the State of New Mexico through participation in and funding of research and education projects.

FOA Board

Chair: Jerry Cooke
Treasurer: Marja Springer

Board Members: Barbara am Ende, Margaret Armstrong, Donna Coleman, Greg Dove, Susan McMichael, Tom Morrison, Tom Noble, and Sherill Spaar

SIGNS OF PROGRESS

In January, Analytic Laboratories Supervisor Shelby Jones and Laboratory Analyst Emma KostECKi took delivery of several elements that will be used in the construction of a magnetically shielded space in the Archaeomagnetic Laboratory at OAS.





OAS Research Associates Bob Florek and Marvin Rowe volunteered to use pXRF to date the ink on the American flag believed to have been flown during Pershing's unsuccessful Punitive Expedition against Pancho Villa. Photo by Scott Nicolay.

HISTORY WRITTEN IN INK

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES TAKE TIME AWAY FROM CNMA TO SHED LIGHT ON A 100-YEAR-OLD INSCRIPTION

BY BOB FLOREK AND MARVIN ROWE

Among the joys of research that come with unexpected results are the element of surprise and the chance to learn new things. We recently had such an experience when we were asked to help analyze an artifact that was a bit different from our usual batch of specimens at the Office of Archaeological Studies.

In October, we were approached by Robert Stokes and Scott Nicolay, archaeologists with the New Mexico State Park system, to see if we could help with analysis of an American flag from the early twentieth century. According to a hand-written inscription on the flag, it was purportedly flown during Pershing's unsuccessful Punitive Expedition against Pancho Villa in 1917. The expedition

was unsuccessful because it failed in obtaining Villa's capture, the primary goal of President Wilson.

In particular, Robert and Scott were interested to see if we could shed any light on the ink used to create in the inscription using Marvin Rowe's Portable X-Ray Fluorescence unit (pXRF).

The device emits low level x-rays and

See **Ink**, on Page 5.

INK

Continued from Page 4.

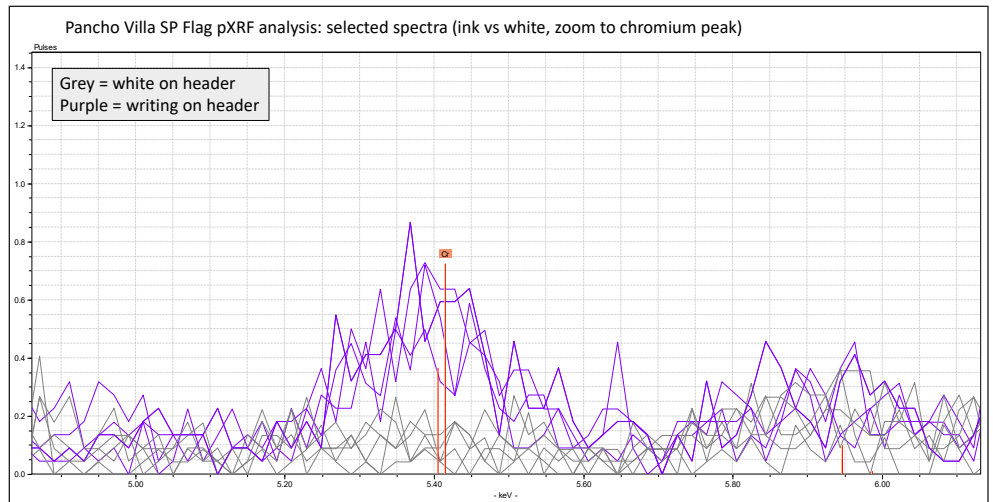
measures the resulting fluorescence caused by electrons moving between different orbital shells in the exposed sample. By studying peaks in the resulting spectrum, it can identify the presence of specific elements. We have used pXRF extensively for a variety of analyses, from rock art to ceramic paints, some of which have been documented in previous articles in this newsletter. It is particularly useful for identifying elements in the mid-range of the periodic table, including metals and rare earth elements.

There was some question about the authenticity of the inscription, and at least one suggestion that it looked like it had been written in Sharpie! Frankly, we were doubtful that pXRF analysis would help much in this situation, but the technique is so portable, quick, and non-destructive that it was certainly worth a try. In particular, Scott thought if we could detect iron in the ink (in comparison with the white cloth background), this would suggest that an iron-based ink had been used.

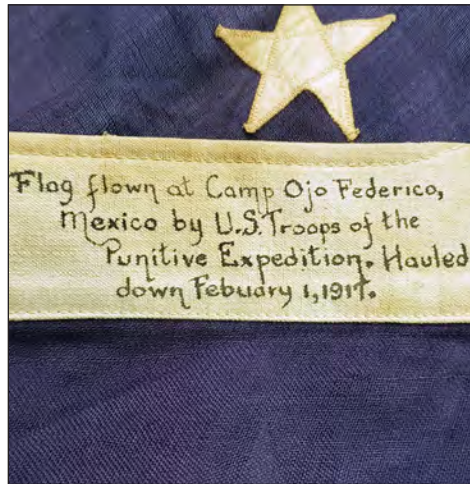
On November 27, 2024, we packed up the pXRF and met Robert and Scott at Level Fine Art Services in Santa Fe, where the flag was being temporarily stored. This flag had definitely seen some action! After admiring it for a few minutes and discussing its story, we set to work analyzing various sections of the flag, paying particular attention to the inscription on the flag's header, or the reinforced section of the flag used for attaching lines to hoist the flag.

Iron is pretty ubiquitous, and we quickly found that it was present throughout the flag, but there was no particular difference in iron concentration in the ink versus the cloth or in other dyes used to create the flag.

However, we did notice slight but significant amounts of the element chromium in the ink, which was not present in the white background of the header. We took several measurements of the ink and the background to confirm, and it became clear that chromium was a component of the ink used to create the inscription.



A readout of the pXRF spectral peak for chromium that was used to determine the age of the ink on the flag.



The inscription on the header of the flag. Photo by Bob Florek.

This caught all of us by surprise, since chromium is not an element we were familiar with from previous studies, but of course, none of us are particularly experts on ink formulas. A bit of subsequent research, however, revealed a distinct possibility: chrome logwood ink, which was made by treating extract from the logwood tree with potassium chromate. The ink became popular in the late nineteenth century. During World War I (1914–1918), when German supplies of chemical dyes to other countries suddenly ceased, use of logwood and its product increased.

Neevel (2021) also includes a figure showing XRF analysis of a chrome logwood ink sample, illustrating a chromium peak in the spectrum as diagnostic of this particular ink. Significantly, we did not detect any

The flag was purportedly flown during Pershing's Punitive Expedition against Pancho Villa in 1917.

chromium in modern writing samples made with a Sharpie and provided by Scott.

While this finding does not definitively confirm the date of the inscription, it certainly lends support to its authenticity, strongly suggesting that someone inscribed the flag shortly after 1917, using chrome logwood ink.

The flag is currently back in storage at Pancho Villa State Park, near Columbus. But hopefully at some point in the future it will be on display there, and we're looking forward to driving down and seeing it again.

Our thanks to Robert Stokes and Scott Nicolay for including us in this project and for input on this article. Thanks also to New Mexico State Parks, Level Fine Art Services, and OAS for their support and assistance.

References

Neevel, Han. (2021). Logwood Writing Inks: History, Production, Forensics, and Use. Restaurator. *International Journal for the Preservation of Library and Archival Material*. 42.

BECOME A SF NATIONAL FOREST SITE STEWARD

Do you love exploring the landscapes of Northern New Mexico? Are you committed to preserving the rich cultural heritage of our region? If so, consider volunteering as a Santa Fe National Forest Site Steward!

The Santa Fe National Forest is responsible for managing one of the largest collections of Heritage Resources in the U.S., including archaeological and historical sites. These resources are threatened by natural processes and by human actions, such as vandalism and exploitation.

The primary responsibility of a Site Steward is to visit assigned sites as part of a team

LEARN MORE

Visit the Santa Fe National Forest Site Steward website at www.sfnfsitestewards.org.

to report damage or significant changes. For volunteers who are not able to participate in field activities, there are also opportunities for administrative work.

The benefits of being a Steward include exploring and learning about culturally significant sites in the SFNF, meeting people with similar interests, and participating in educational events throughout the year.



A few of the many petroglyphs at the Cieneguilla Rock Art Site in the Santa Fe National Forest. Photo by Scott Jaquith.

DIRECTOR

Continued from Page 1.

representing a diasporic community, a government,...an artist's family, and countless other types of people or groups of people who see their history [at the museum]."

Another definition that I think really encapsulates the spirit behind the term is a "descendant community retains ancestral and cultural ties to collections stewarded by the [organization]."

We can easily draw the connections between these conceptualizations of what a descendant community is and the work that OAS does. The Office of Archaeological Studies is a statewide organization that serves the people of New Mexico, which means that our responsibility is to the rich and varied cultural heritage of New Mexico. For us, a descendant community could be thought of as any people or group with cultural and ancestral ties to the archaeological resources that are part of our research programs or under our temporary stewardship.

I would also offer that the Friends of

Archaeology represent the rich diversity of the people who call New Mexico home. Indeed, FOA boasts members from around the globe! Working with Lauren Paige of the Foundation, we have made it one of our goals to reach out to as many FOA members as possible through programming in or near their communities. Please keep an eye out for programming in your area in the coming year.

February marks Black History Month across the United States. The origins of Black History Month go back more than a century. The story of how this observance has developed since the 1920s is fascinating by itself. According to the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the man credited with founding Black History Month, Carter G. Woodson, chose February to draw on traditions in African-American communities where the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass were celebrated. However, his real ambition for the commemoration of African-American history was to go beyond the veneration of a few great individuals and promote the understanding of the entirety of the

African-American people. Not just the privileged or powerful, but the "everyday people," as well.

Woodson's vision of history that seeks to elucidate the lives of everyone resonates with me. Archaeology is well suited to this pursuit. Written records are wrought with biases and limitations that stem from a multitude of variables including historical trends in literacy, structures of power, and cultural mores. On the other hand, everyone leaves an archaeological trace. And while the archaeological record suffers from its own set of vagaries and (sometimes irresolvable) ambiguities, those traces can provide glimpses into the everyday lives of everyday people.

At OAS, we believe that part of our work here is to provide research and programming that elucidates the lives of all the descendant communities in New Mexico. We are excited to foster a collaborative relationship with the communities of this great state. Sharing knowledge. Promoting the rich and diverse heritage that makes New Mexico unique. That includes the everyday lived experiences of African-Americans in the history of New Mexico and all of the other descendant communities. ❖

GEORGE

Continued from Page 1.

later, in 1926. Sadly, McJunkin had passed away by that time. What's more, in 1926, Folsom was considered a "bison quarry" that could potentially supply an entire skeleton suitable for museum display. It was not until weeks later, after excavations were already underway, that the true potential of the site was fully realized; it was a full year later that the famous in situ Folsom point, found between two bison ribs, was uncovered.

I don't know of any first-hand account of these events written by McJunkin himself, and the unfortunate reality is that both McJunkin's life and the circumstances of the Folsom discovery are the subject of repeated speculation and often contradictory secondary or even tertiary accounts. We do know for certain that McJunkin was checking the fences of the Crowfoot Ranch after the flood of 1908, when he noticed bison bones, and we know that at some point he mentioned the find to Raton blacksmith Carl Schwachheim. While sometimes characterized as fortuitous, these events were not entirely happenstance.

McJunkin was born in the early 1850s on a Texas ranch. Accounts of his life vary and seem sprinkled with details that may be unique to each source. Some accounts maintain he was born a slave; others claim that his father had bought his freedom prior to McJunkin's birth. Whatever the case may be, he grew up learning how to be a rancher and a cowboy. He also learned how to read and had a curiosity about the world that extended well beyond being a cowpoke. By all accounts, he was particularly interested in naturalist literature and would today probably be counted as an amateur naturalist. As with other details, there is no agreement about how he came to be literate or to acquire his knowledge. Nonetheless, it was neither horse luck nor his gut feeling that led him to the realization that he had discovered something noteworthy in Wild Horse Arroyo. Rather, his understanding was due to the confluence of his experience as a rancher and his knowledge of natural history. I also don't believe it was a coincidence that he confided in Carl Schwachheim. Carl was a fossil hunter and



The Folsom point is currently on display at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science.

friend of another amateur naturalist and banker from Raton, Fred Howarth.

And what did George discover? Here again, there is more speculation than fact. We know that he found the bison bones, but whether he also observed or collected any artifacts at that time cannot be verified. If he did, that fact was lost or ignored by the time the discovery was reported to Jesse Figgins, Director of the Colorado Museum of Natural History in Denver in the Spring of 1926. It was Figgins who was interested in the finds as a display for his museum.

At this point, I hope you're wondering why a Colorado museum was involved rather than the Museum of New Mexico. According to the niece and nephew of Schwachheim, several attempts were made to get the State of New Mexico involved. And according to the story, the attempts were rebuffed repeatedly. Eventually, Howarth turned to Harold Cook, who was a rancher, paleontologist, and Honorary Curator at the Colorado Museum of Natural History. This also was not a coincidence. Harold Cook and Jesse Figgins were at the center of a long-standing, bitter, and public dispute regarding the antiquity of humans in North America. They had previously reported on finds from other sites, including

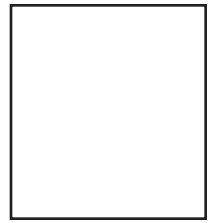
a bison bone bed with artifacts in Texas, and had been savagely rebuked by some of the most prominent figures in archaeology at the time. While Figgins was interested in museum displays of Pleistocene fauna, Cook claimed that he recognized the opportunity to find new evidence for his fight against the establishment.

If the State, presumably through the Museum of New Mexico, had taken on the excavations at Folsom, it would have set up a very interesting and entirely different historical narrative. Edgar Hewett, founder and Director of the Museum of New Mexico, was a friend and colleague of Cook and Figgins's biggest critics: the prominent William Henry Holmes and Aleš Hrdlička. While writing this piece, I examined some of the correspondence between Hewett and Holmes in and around the year 1926. None of the letters mention the Folsom site directly, or Cook or Figgins. However, the letters do complain strenuously about the "archaeological jazz" that Hewett felt was prevalent at the time. Hewett blamed the sensational press around the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb earlier in the decade for creating an insatiable appetite in the public for new, amazing discoveries. He complained that there were too many scientists ready to offer up sensational claims to feed those desires. His lamentations echo those of Hrdlička, who described it as an epidemic. Now we know that the Folsom site turned out to be much more than "all that jazz."

The Folsom site changed the course of history in North American archaeology and solidified McJunkin in archaeological history and lore. At least, he is receiving due recognition these days. There have been attempts to discredit or devalue his contribution to the discovery of the Folsom site. Not only are such attacks unnecessary, they are irrelevant. McJunkin's life would be fascinating and worthy of recognition even if he had never discovered the bones in Wild Horse Arroyo.

Black cowboys represented at least one quarter of all hands on cattle drives from 1866 to 1895 in Texas. The western cattle industry at that time afforded African-American men, who had the skills, a chance to pursue better and safer lives

See **McJunkin**, on Page 8.



MCJUNKIN

Continued from Page 7.

than they could find in the Deep South. African Americans could rise through ranks in western cattle operations. Indeed, McJunkin is described as foreman at the Crowfoot Ranch. And, while there were more opportunities for African-American cowboys out west, life was still not without obstacles and difficulties.

I have always been curious about the other parts of McJunkin's life, and I wonder what we would learn about his life through archaeology.

My academic training was in Paleoindian archaeology and the peopling of the Americas, and consequently I have examined thousands of Paleoindian projectile points and excavated more than a few Paleoindian sites. Over my career, I've had the opportunity to document many historic sites, including ranches. But I have never studied the homestead of an African-American cowboy.

If you were to plop me down in Colfax County today and ask me if I'd rather

discover a new Folsom site or study McJunkin's home site, I might very well choose the latter.

References

Meltzer, David J. (2006) *Folsom: New archaeological investigations of a classic Paleoindian bison kill*. UC Press.

Porter, Kenneth. (1994) *African-Americans in the Cattle Industry. In Peoples of Color in the American West*. Heath and Company Press.

www.folsomvillage.com/FolsomAreaHistory

The extraordinary life and long legacy of Black cowboy George McJunkin. <https://www.kunm.org/local-news/2023-02-24/the-extraordinary-life-and-long-legacy-of-black-cowboy-george-mcjunkin>

Edgar L. Hewett Digitized Collections. Available online at <https://archives.newmexicoculture.org>

MAKE YOUR MARK ON NM ARCHAEOLOGY!

Please consider supporting the Office of Archaeological Studies by making a gift to education or research by check, credit, stock, IRA rollover, or planned gift. Your tax-deductible donation through the Museum of New Mexico Foundation will have a lasting impact. One hundred percent of your donation will be directed to the OAS. No administrative fees are charged. Give online: museumfoundation.org/give/. For questions, or to donate, contact Lauren Paige at (505) 982-2282, or via e-mail at lauren@museumfoundation.org.

