



The PROFILE

November 2006

Ron Ralph Presents Rock Art of Hueco Tanks

Ron Ralph, a leading Texas cave archeologist and past president of the Texas Archeological Society, will discuss the rock art of Hueco Tanks at the November 10th meeting. Located 32 miles east of El Paso in the northern Chihuahuan desert, the Hueco Tanks State Park is an oasis in the desert. Jutting majestically out of the desert floor, the geologic batholith which forms the park displays a unique attraction; natural cisterns or huecos (Spanish for "tanks" or holes) formed in the native bedrock store water during the wet seasons.



*Ancestral Puebloan pictograph,
Tlaloc Figure*

Archeological evidence supports human visitation of Hueco Tanks for the last 10,000 years, with near constant occupation for the last 5000 years. In 1851, John R. Bartlett's visit to Hueco Tanks provided the first written record of rock paintings. According to TPWD, Native Americans from Archaic hunters to the Mescalero Apaches have drawn unique mythological designs and human and animal figures on the rocks, including over 200 face designs or "masks". With pictographs dating as early as A.D. 620 and with cultural influences from Mexico, New Mexico and the southern High Plains, the park is considered one of North America's premier rock art localities.

Ron Ralph began studying caves and archeology in California in 1963 and has worked extensively throughout the southwestern United States and much of northern Mexico. He worked 13 years as an archeological consultant before joining the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) for 21 years. Since retiring from TPWD in 1997, he has returned to consulting and has worked as an independent contractor since 2000. During his tenure at TPWD, he first worked with the Master Planning Branch. Later, he was the Resource Specialist for Region 2 (north-central Texas). He is a director and office manager of the Texas Speleological Survey and served as President of the Texas Archeological Society in 2005. He currently chairs the TAS Reports and Curation Committee.

The November 10 meeting will be held at our usual location in Anderson Hall on the quadrangle of the University of St. Thomas, at 7:30pm. For a detailed map, visit the HAS web site at www.houstonarcheology.org.

December 8, 2006 Program: The speaker will be Reeda Peel, Texas Rock Art Database Director. Anyone wishing to deliver a presentation at a future meeting should contact Michael Bailey at m Bailey@beamans.com.

Publication Notice: HAS Report no. 24 entitled "Cultural Sequence on the Coastal Margin of Southeast Texas" is now available. This report can be obtained from the Houston Archeological Society, c/o L. W. Patterson, 418 Wycliffe, Houston, TX 77079-7133. The price is \$5.00 ppd.

Art at Paint Rock, Texas

The Annual Meeting of the Texas Archaeological Society (TAS) was held October 20-22 in San Angelo, with papers being presented on archeology projects all over the state. I enjoyed the meeting, but the best part for me was Sunday morning when I was able to take a rock art tour just outside the tiny town of Paint Rock.

The site is located on private property owned by Kay Campbell and her husband Fred. Kay inherited the ranch from her grandfather, who was the original settler. Kay is 79 years old, a former art teacher, and tour guide extraordinaire. She has been studying the rock art on her place all her life, so she knows more about it than possibly any other living human being. Her lively talk is full of entertaining anecdotes and humor, spiced with artifacts to see and touch.

After a lengthy introductory session, Kay led us from the ranch house to a place where the earth had split open eons ago, with one side of the fault rising about 40 feet above the other side for a distance of about half a mile. At the far end of the fault was a shaded spring that looked like an ideal camping spot for people passing through the countryside. Evidently, this site became a holy place where people came regularly to carry out rituals of one kind or another, because the exposed rock along the fault is covered with dozens of drawings painted in red and black pigment.

No one knows the exact meanings of the drawings, but some educated guesses have been made. For example, there is a figure of a woman in a hoop skirt, which would indicate a mid-nineteenth century timeframe. She is lying horizontally, which usually signifies captivity. Beside her is a shield with crossed lances, signifying a war party, and two symbols for scalps. In 1865, three women were attacked in their wagon near the town of Mason by a party of Comanches, who killed two of them and carried a third off into captivity. Is this a record of that event? No one knows for sure.



Figure at top right is thought to be a warrior headed for the happy hunting grounds. Dotted line shows angle of light each equinox.

Several drawings appear to be related to astronomy. There is a turtle within a circle, which is thought to be a solstice symbol. Around June 21 each year, there are lines of light pointing to the turtle, creating a marker for the beginning of summer. Another figure appears to be a man whose body has been wrapped for burial, and he is walking upward as if ascending a staircase to the happy hunting grounds. Each equinox, a shaft of light falls from a notch in the rock above, creating a slanted "ramp" that exactly matches the angle of the man's feet, a path of light to the heavens.

I took lots of pictures, one of which is included here, and I'll be glad to share them at the December monthly meeting, for anyone interested in rock art. The tour was a great ending to an interesting weekend.

-- Linda Swift

HOUSTON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY MEETING MINUTES, OCTOBER 13, 2006

Michael Bailey, HAS Vice President called the October meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. There were 35 people in attendance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Leeland Patterson's Report # 24, Cultural Sequence on the Coastal Margin of Southeast Texas, is now available.
- Leeland Patterson presented the annual HAS Award of Merit to Fr. Edward A. Bader.
- Fr. Bader announced a new exhibit; "Photographs from the 19th Century" will open Sunday, October 22 at the Little Gallery at the University of St. Thomas.

The business meeting was conducted immediately following the program. The September meeting minutes were approved without corrections.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Submitted by Tom Nuckols, Secretary

The Month of November

November is named for the Latin word *novem*, meaning nine, as this month was the ninth month in the Roman calendar until a monthless winter period was divided into January and February. This month Roman farmers prepared for the long, hard winter. The Romans felt that the four phases of the year imitated the stages of human life and November was the time to accept the final stage. Great activity for

the year was over and it was time for a change, something new, and the cycle to continue. The central event this month was the feast of Jupiter, patron deity of the Roman state, and solemn processions, games and theatrical performances were held.

—Fred Kelly

Upcoming Events

Mark Your Calendars! Father of Texas Celebration at San Felipe: Friday & Saturday, November 3-4, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.: Volunteers needed for both days, 4 hour shifts; sign-up sheet at the meeting. Contact Beth Aucoin (281) 480-6151 or ekpj.aucoin@prodigy.net.

Texas Archeological Steward **Johnny Pollan** will present a program on Antebellum Plantations of Brazoria County at the meeting of the Fort Bend Archeological Society on November 8 at 7PM at the George Memorial Library in Richmond. The public is invited.

“A Resonating Past: Archaeology and Today’s Yemen” lecture by Dr. Thomas B. Stevenson of the University of Ohio-Zanesville will be held on Thursday, November 16, at 7:00PM. Archeological Institute of America, Sewell Hall, Rice University.

HAS LIBRARY: Open on Friday, November 10, from 6:30pm to 7:20pm, 3907 Yoakum Blvd.

LABORATORY SCHEDULE: Monday, November 13 & 27 at 7:00 p.m.; Sewall Hall, Room 103, Rice University.

2006 HAS Award of Merit Goes to Fr. Edward Bader

Annual awards of the Houston Archeological Society were presented at the October 2006 meeting. An HAS Merit Award was given to Fr. Edward Bader for outstanding support of HAS activities. The Southeast Texas Archeological Research Award was not given this year.

The Southeast Texas Archeological Research award has previously been given to William McClure, Richey Ebersole, Joe Hudgins, Lawrence Aten, Alan Duke, Lee Patterson, Grant Hall, Sheldon Kindall, Dee Ann Story, Richard Gregg, Etta Palmer, and Harry Shafer. The HAS Merit Award has previously been given to Etta Palmer, Pam Wheat, Sheldon Kindall, Bob Etheridge, Richard Gregg, Don McReynolds, Bernard Naman, Beth Aucoin, Karen Acker, Linda Swift, Muriel Walker, Jeanette Siciliano, Jim Wells, Joe Hudgins, Tom Nuckols, Robert Shelby, Wanda Carter, Richard Carter, David Pettus, Mary Barbara Gold, and William Haskell. Other previous HAS awards include a special award

to Alan Duke as HAS Journal Editor, and election of Alan Duke, Don Lewis, Richard Gregg, Evelyn Lewis, and Pam Wheat as Lifetime Members of the HAS. —Lee Patterson



Fr. Edward Bader receives, from Leland Patterson, the HAS Merit Award for his long-time dedication to and support of the society and its activities.

HAS Ongoing Excavations

The Houston Archeological Society is currently excavating a test pit at a location that might be the site of Champ d'Asile, a French fort briefly occupied in the seventeenth century. The purpose of this test pit is to see if this is the correct location of the fort – if it is, this will be a major find.



We are putting in a 2m x 2m test pit. Originally, the purpose was to dig into a stratum of burnt material that was thought to be about 5 feet deep and only a few inches thick. The stratum was highly visible

in the Trinity River bluff. As it turns out, the deposit of burnt material is much larger than anticipated, and we encountered the material just a little deeper than 1 foot. The artifacts from this dig are being processed in our lab at Rice University.

The next workday will be Saturday, November 11. Anybody who wishes to participate should meet at the Burger King in Liberty in time to leave for the site by 9:00 AM. The Burger King is on the left side of Hwy 90 going east through Liberty.

If more information is desired, call Sheldon Kindall at 281-326-2160 or Beth Aucoin at 281-480-6151.

Please submit articles for publication to Sara Guillote, sguillote@hotmail.com
Submit articles no later than November 24th for the December issue.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ARCHEOLOGY IN THIS AREA, CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:

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The Profile

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