

ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS JOHNSON'S STATION (41IR123) IRION COUNTY, TEXAS

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ABSTRACT

One of the most significant periods of the Concho Valley was the period of pre and post-Civil War. This period saw exploding expansion in our country as emigrants made their way through this area to points further west, mostly New Mexico and California. This brought about the Butterfield Stage line from 1857 to 1861, as well as settlers, cattle drives, and trade caravans on this same trail. It also brought with it the Indian wars as the tribes such as the Apache and Comanche viewed this expansion as an encroachment on their land so necessary to the survival of their tribes. As the attacks on settlers and emigrants increased, it brought more military camps and forts to the region. As such, studying the various locations related to these times is significant in clarifying the people and events of those times.

The story of Johnson's Station had become intermixed with several different locations and events over the years, and finding and studying this location helped to straighten out the history of this small but important location in our area.

The efforts began with a small group conducting metal-detecting surveys of two closely related locations. As evidence grew that this was, in fact, the location of Johnson's Station, the efforts expanded to include the entire CVAS group. These efforts, along with a serious research effort with Fort Concho, eventually brought forward and filled in the gaps of the lost story of Johnson's Station.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The central team for this project from beginning to end was Larry Riemenschneider, CVAS Directory, CVAS members Jack Pool, and Tom Ashmore. We could never have attempted this project without the kindness and generosity of the landowner. From the first phone call, he was with us and deserves our sincere thanks. We also thank Evelyn Lemons, Librarian/Archivist at Fort Concho, for providing maps and historical information from the Fort Concho archives. Without her assistance, the history of this station could never have been discerned. Also lending their wealth of experience to our artifact identification was Lana and Garland Richards, owners of Fort Chadbourne. A special thanks to the many CVAS volunteers who devoted their time to the project. They played a key role in the excavation and collecting of artifacts.



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Johnson's Station

Although there have been numerous references to Johnson's Station by historians of the Butterfield Trail, the location slipped away in history. This project tried to determine if the location could be recovered to clarify the many contradictions published over the years. Research of publicly available maps and publications gave a generalized area to begin searching. A Google Earth high-resolution satellite imagery search helped narrow down the probable location. The landowner was contacted and agreed to a reconnaissance of the area. On our first survey, an unknown historic site was found with white-ware pieces, metal, and many stones scattered around that looked to have been used to construct some portion of a building. Additionally, a brush pile nearby had larger stones that were fired as if they might have been used for a fireplace or hearth. When this information was presented to the landowner, whose family had owned the property since the late 1800s, he indicated there was no known site at that location. Thus began an extensive survey, which eventually uncovered a much more extensive site that turned out to be the old Butterfield Overland Mail's Johnson's Station.

LOCATION

Johnson's Station was the second relay station for the Butterfield Stage line heading west after leaving Fort Chadbourne, Texas. It was one in a series of stations for the stages crossing West Texas on the way to or from the Pecos River and New Mexico between 1857 and 1861. It was located on the Middle Concho River after a southwesterly crossing of 30 miles through the dry West Texas land from the previous Grape Creek Station. Coming from the west, it was the next station after the Head of the Concho station. Although neither Fort Concho nor San Angelo existed at the time, the location resides around 20 miles to the west.

This entire area covers approximately five acres. It is bordered on the eastern side by a shallow draw, on the northern side by a slight rise and open ranch land, on the southeastern side by a 25-foot deep draw, and on the south side by a large area of pecan and oak trees. It is in an active floodplain with low hills to the north and south. The main area of interest, as well as the western and northern areas, are open fields cleared of cedar and mesquite by the landowner and pushed into brush piles. In the 1800s, this area would have been open prairie. The elevation is 2,050 feet. The Middle Concho River lies approximately 700 feet south of the main building area and 300 feet south of a former second building area.

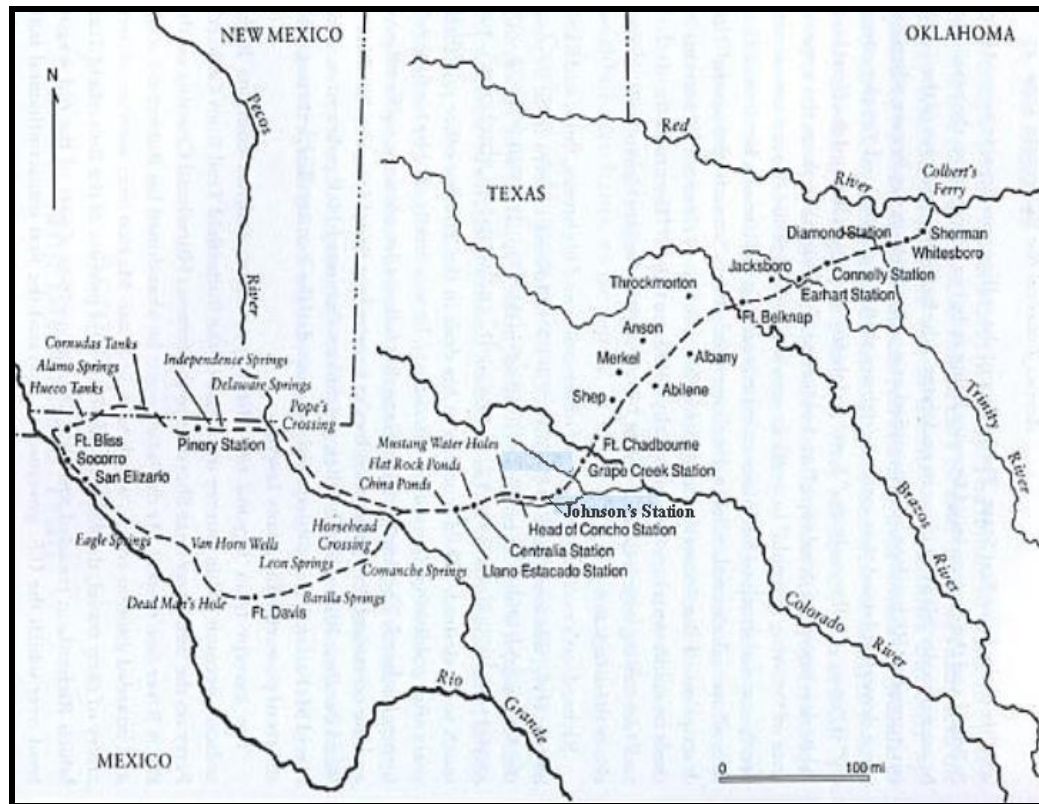


Figure 1: Butterfield Overland Mail route

Historiography and Archival Research

The focus of the archival research for this project was on those aspects that pointed to the location of Johnson's Station. The task was to collect first-hand civilian and military accounts of the station and, any details of distance from known locations to the station and any trail information leading to or from the station. Most of this information came from the Fort Concho archives or county land deeds maintained in the Tom Green County Clerk's archival section.

There is much confusion throughout the history books and articles over the years about this small station west of San Angelo. Many historians confused this station with Camp Johnston on the North Concho River. Camp Johnston was never a stage station. It was the military camp that preceded Fort Chadbourne. Some have also confused the name as Johnston's Station. This is based on the same confusion but mixes names from each location. First-hand reports of the time represent the name as Johnson's Station, Johnson Station, or Camp Johnson. Finally, some confuse the Middle Concho Johnson's Station with another Johnson's Station located in Tarrant County, just south of present-day Arlington, Texas, between Dallas and Fort Worth.

Johnson's Station

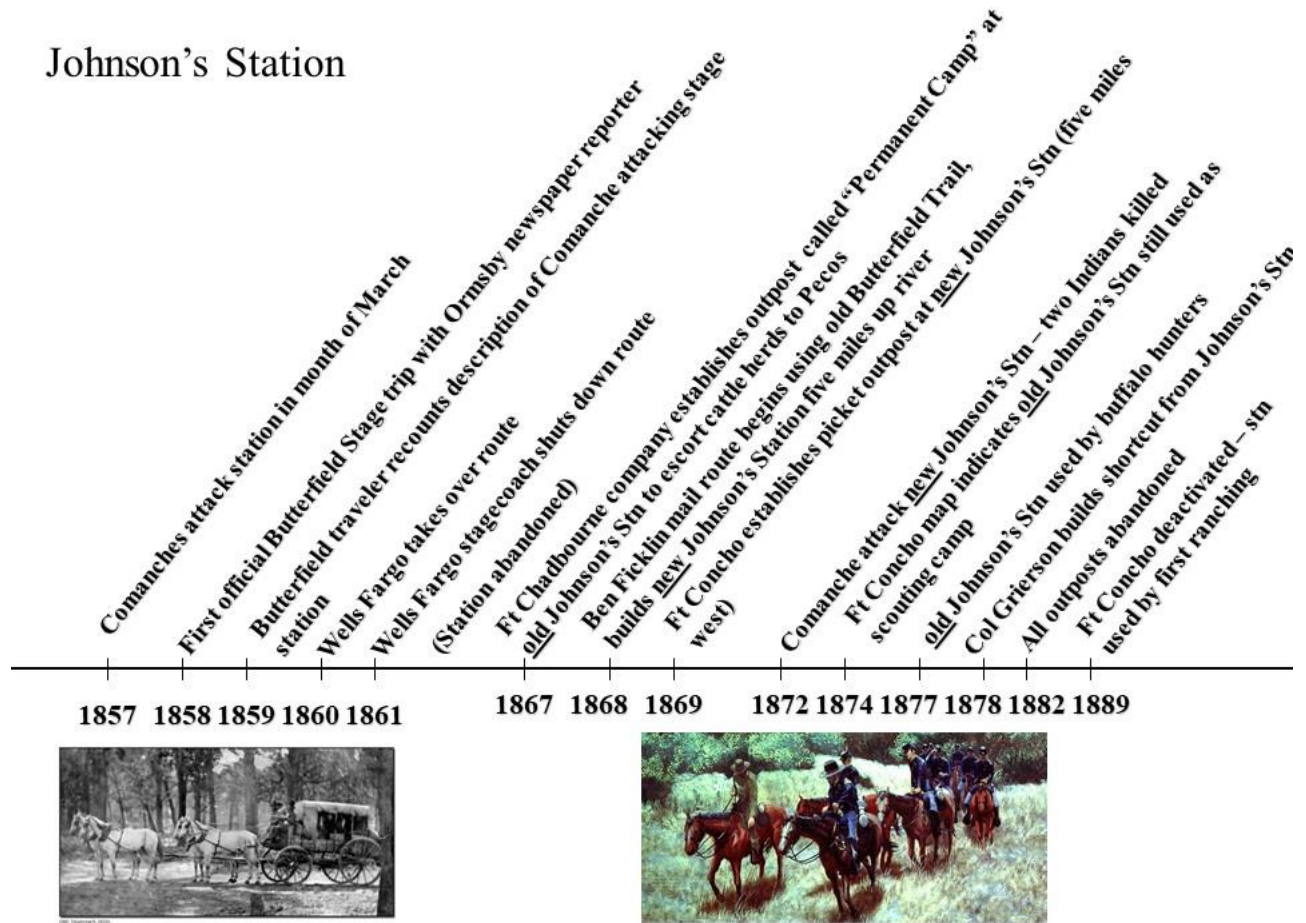


Figure 2: Johnson's Station Timeline

Butterfield Stage Period

It was a Friday afternoon in March, 1857, at Johnson's Station on the Middle Concho River, and the stage was due anytime. Johnson's Station was a small line station, just enough for a quick meal and change of mules. Mr. and Mrs. Evaness ran it with five other hands. Suddenly, a large group of Comanche appeared out of nowhere. The Indians tried stealing the mules, but they were hobbled with chains and locks, so they killed them. Then, they turned their attention to the station. The men and one woman barricaded themselves into one side of a log cabin that was separated by a 10-foot breezeway, called a dog trot. The Indians looted the side that was not barricaded, which included the kitchen. However, they were not satisfied and began using flaming arrows onto the roof to force the occupants out of the barricaded side. The station workers yelled out in Spanish that they were well-armed but would not fire on the Indians if they let them go. The Indians agreed, but when Mrs. Evaness emerged, one of the Indians said in English that the white woman was beautiful and that he wanted her for his own. Mr. Evaness heard the comment and killed the Indian on the spot. The employees ran for cover in a grove of trees with the Indians firing on them. Mr. and Mrs. Evaness were wounded, and things were not looking good. Just at that time, the

stagecoach appeared on the road. Thinking the coach might be bringing troops from Fort Chadbourne, the Indians quickly departed. (Wilbarger)

Such was the life on the Butterfield Stage route. Although the government contract did not begin until 1858, this story, conveyed in an 1889 account, indicates the stagecoach line was running in some capacity as early as March, 1857.

Although the larger stations such as Fort Chadbourne were what folks saw on the route schedules, the fact was they needed stations spaced approximately 25 - 30 miles apart to relieve the mule teams. After Fort Chadbourne, the travelers first came to the Grape Creek Station, and next was Johnson's Station.

Another account in October 1859 by a traveler went like this. “Our spirited little landlady, reared in eastern Texas, gave us a description of an attack on the station by one hundred twenty Comanche who were held off by the stock tender, her husband, and herself three weeks before.” The lady declared, “We won’t be driven out by worthless red-skins.” The traveler also noted iron-pointed arrows, with feathers, were still sticking in the cottonwood log fence that surrounded the station. (Haley, Green) The reference to cottonwood logs was probably a misidentification of the Pecan trees by someone unfamiliar with the area.



Figure 3: cottonwood tree

pecan tree

The Butterfield Overland Mail schedule called for stagecoaches to pass in each direction twice per week. For Johnson’s Station, the coaches would arrive Tuesdays and Fridays heading west and Wednesdays and Saturdays heading east. The entire trip took 25 days in

one direction. For the West Texas portion of the trip, the wagons were more rugged than the eastern Concord coaches. They were built especially for Butterfield and were called Celerity Wagons (or Mud Wagons) due to their rugged construction.



Figure 4: Celerity Wagon used by Butterfield Overland Mail Company

Adam Rankin Johnson acted as county surveyor and as an agent for the Butterfield Overland Mail as far west as El Paso, and also became a stage driver for the company. Although he did not purchase the land for Johnson's Station he did purchase several other sections of land along the Middle Concho River. It was likely Johnson that first chose the location for the mail station. When the Civil War broke out Johnson joined the Partisan Rangers of the Confederate States Army, later reaching the rank of Brigadier General. After the Civil War Johnson founded the town of Marble Falls, Texas



Figure 5: Adam Rankin "Stovepipe" Johnson

Some researchers speculated that the station moved shortly after its initial service with the Butterfield Overland Mail, but no records support this theory. Logic also dictates that this small group had neither the time nor the security to build an entirely new station while at the same time keeping their stock tended and maintaining the station schedule. The Middle Concho Johnson's Station probably served the Butterfield (later Wells Fargo) mail and stage route until the line was shut down in 1861 due to the onset of the Civil War. However, the historians were not completely wrong. Johnson's Station probably did move upriver later, in the post-Civil War period.

Fort Chadbourne, Fort Concho, San Antonio to El Paso Mail Route Period

Johnson's Station #2 - San Antonio to El Paso (Ben Ficklin) Mail Station

The move of Johnson's Station took place when the San Antonio to El Paso mail route started up in 1868, after the Civil War. It connected into the old Butterfield Trail after leaving Fort Concho. The stage would leave the Concho Mail Station, a few miles south of Fort Concho. It would drive to the fort to pick up passengers and mail before heading west to follow the old Butterfield Trail to the Pecos River and on to El Paso. The original Johnson's Station was located at the best location possible within the maximum range set for the mules to be relieved for the Butterfield route coming from the north. In this case, it was 30 miles from the Grape Creek Station. The next stop after Johnson's Station was Head of the Concho Station, a distance of 30 miles again. When the new mail line began, they must have realized the first stop was too short from Fort Concho. So they moved it farther upriver to more appropriate spacing between stations. They decided to keep the same name. Land deeds support this new location's successive ownership by various partners of the Ben Ficklin stage line. A detailed satellite imagery search of the later Fort Stockton/El Paso Mail Road and the Grierson shortcut portion of that road revealed the likely location of this station at the proper distance from Fort Concho and indicated on the land deeds. The Grierson shortcut, as it was called, was ordered to be built by the commander, Colonel Benjamin Grierson. The actual shortcut trail runs by Johnson Station #1 and straight to Johnson Station #2.

US Cavalry, Fort Chadbourne

During the same general time frame that the Ben Ficklin line was getting started the original Johnson's Station probably served as a military camp by units from Fort Chadbourne. In June 1867 Lieutenant Boehm left Fort Chadbourne with a detachment of 40 men and followed the Butterfield Trail down to the Middle Concho. They set up what they called 'Permanent Camp' listed as 18 miles from the junction of the Middle and North Concho Rivers. This is the location of the original Johnson's Station measured by the trail running along the Middle Concho River to the junction of the two rivers. Basing out of this location they escorted cattle herds to the Pecos for one month, at which time they were relieved by G Company of the 4th U.S. Cavalry. This rotation of company-size detachments continued for

six months into November 1867, when Fort Chadbourne finally closed and moved to start up Fort Concho the following month. (Haley, Taylor)

US Cavalry, Fort Concho

After Fort Concho was established the troops again took up the responsibility of protecting the Ben Ficklin mail line and escorting cattle drives. In June 1869 soldiers began permanent picket duty at the new Johnson's Station. In December the commander of the Pecos Region instructed the Fort Concho commander to build permanent quarters at the station – a building with a pole roof covered with mud or unformed adobe that could overlook the corral. The picket outpost consisted of one noncommissioned officer and four privates. These were detailed by the infantry companies at Fort Concho. (Concho)

One day just before Christmas in 1869 a band of Indians hit this mail station and ran off five cavalry horses. The raid brought a quick reaction. Fifty troopers rode out of Fort Concho in pursuit. To forestall further raids, the command later dispatched a lieutenant with two sergeants, two corporals, and twenty-three privates of E Company, Ninth Cavalry, plus a hospital attendant, headed for Johnson's Station. They planned to stay for at least a month, scouting the region vigorously for hostile bands. (Uglove) It is highly likely that this large detachment once again took advantage of the original Johnson's Station location as its base of operations.

Documents from Fort Concho indicate that both Johnson's Stations were well known and referenced by cavalry scouting parties well into 1879. A scouting map of 1872 shows (Figure 6) Johnson's Station #1, Johnson's Station #2, and Head of the Concho Station. We can be sure of the identity of Johnson's Station #1 in this map, based on the creek annotated to the east. This is now called West Rocky Creek, and it is the only creek that runs straight north and divides near its source.

Another scouting map of 1874 (Figure 7) shows units of the 9th Cavalry camped at Johnson's Station and the 10th Cavalry at Camp Charlotte. Since mail station guard detachments were constantly detailed to the mail stations during this time, this map was probably intended to show only the cavalry camp locations, one of which being the original Johnson's Station. The map also gives a scale of miles, which matches correctly the 9th Cavalry location to the original Johnson's Station.

Finally, a scouting report of 1879 reports the detachment passed both the “old and the new Johnson's Station” on their way out to Camp Charlotte. Additional evidence of the newer station maintaining the Johnson's Station name comes from multiple reports referencing Johnson's Station and the distances marched from known points to the station. Six reports give the correct distance to indicate they were referencing the newer mail station location. These reports covered the periods of 1872, 1877, and 1879. Two reports give the correct

distance to indicate they were referencing the original Johnson's Station. These reports were dated 1874 and 1879. (Concho)

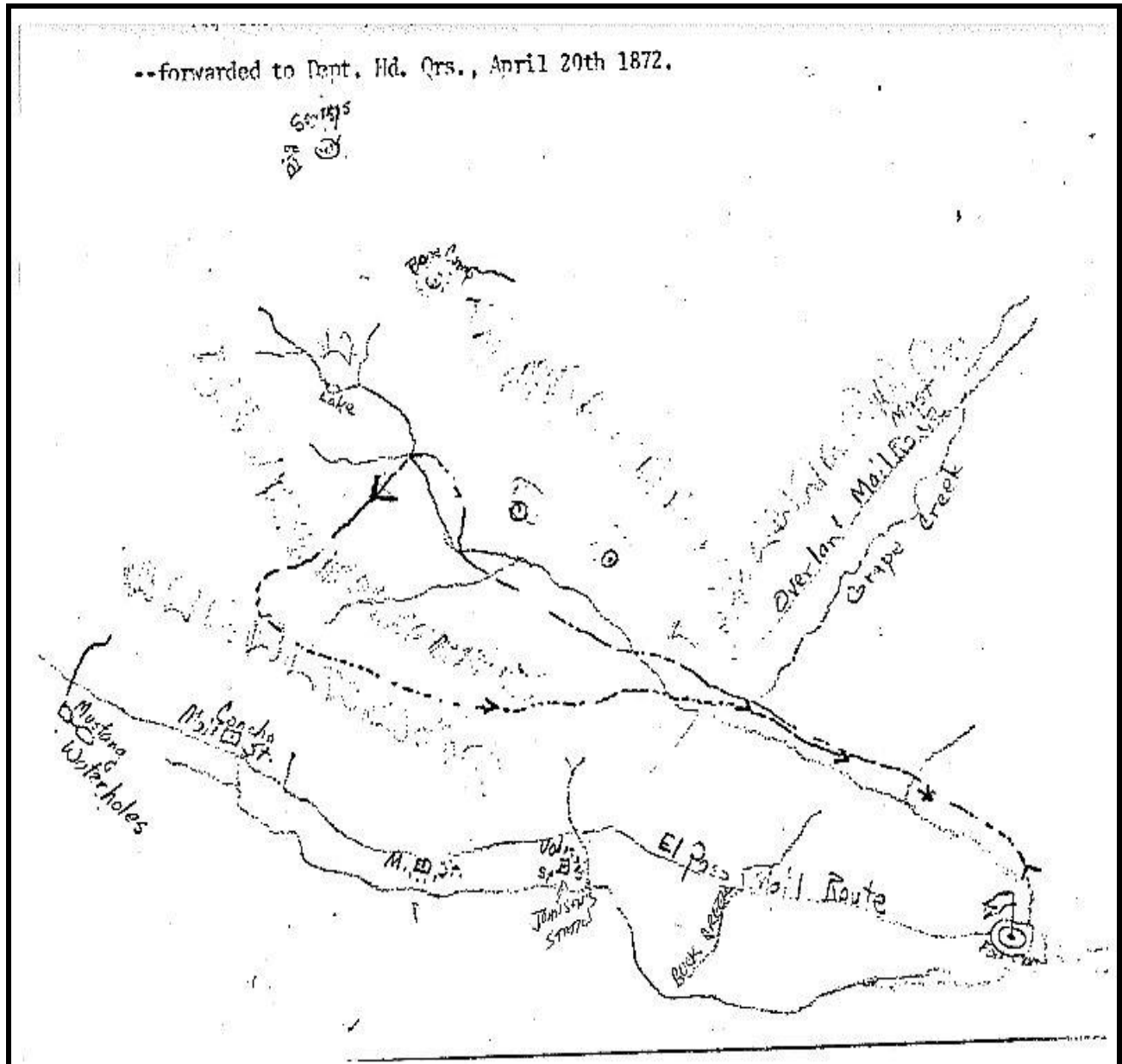


Figure 6: The 1872 scout map shows Johnson's Station #2 and the old Butterfield Mather Station

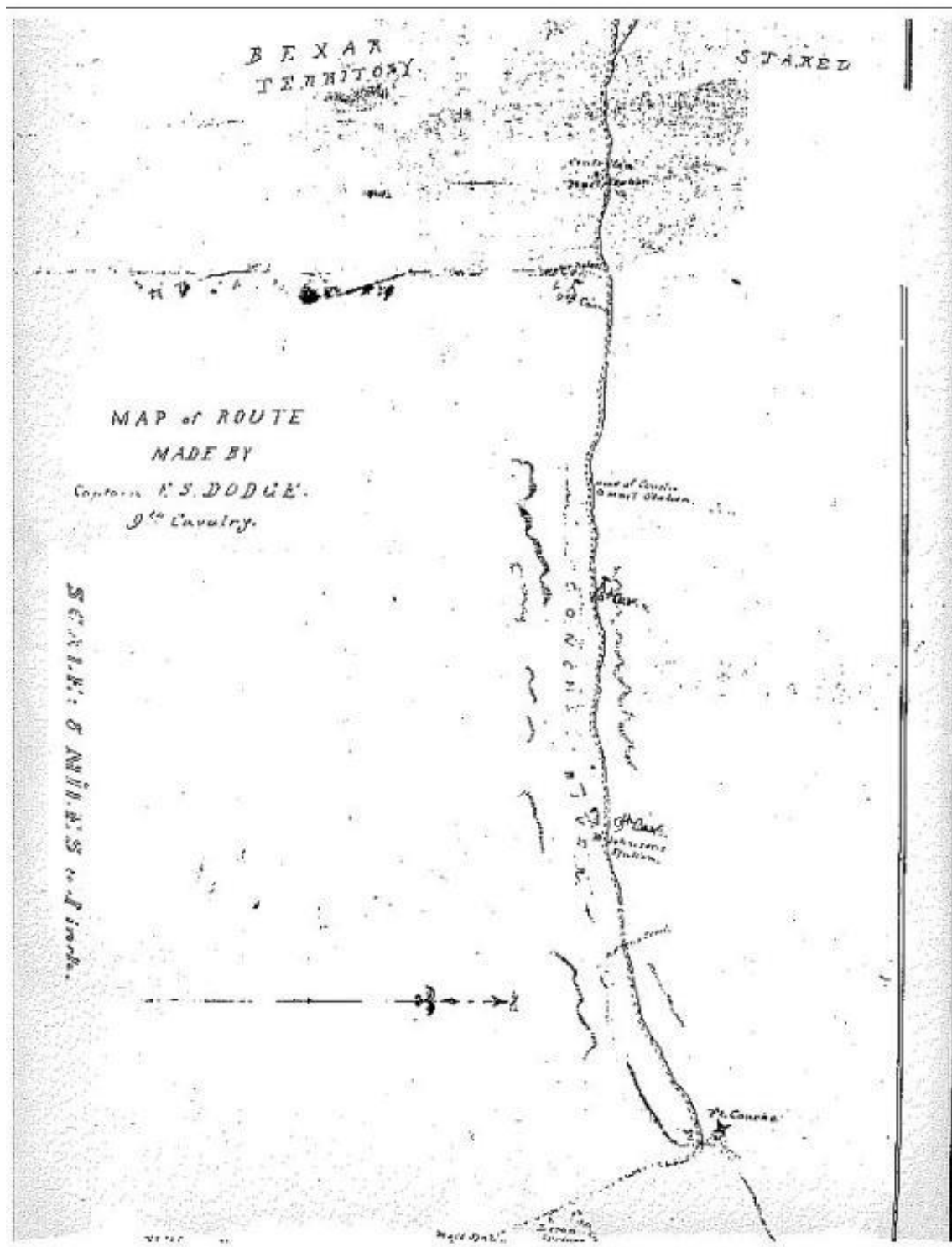


Figure 7: The 1874 scout map shows cavalry at two camp locations (Camp Charlotte, Johnson's Station) but does not convey the infantry detachments during that period at both the new mail station and Head of Concho mail station. Distance is correct for old Johnson's Station.

In 1882 all outposts were abandoned as the new railroad line made it to El Paso and the stagecoaches were no longer needed for passengers or mail.

Ranch Period

The current landowner's family purchased the property that the old Johnson's Station was located on in the late 1890s. There is no family memory of this location ever having a structure or being occupied. In recent years the area had been bulldozed for brush clearing. The known location of the original ranch house is designated 411R118 and is located approximately one mile upriver. It consisted of a pier and beam ranch house with a well and large cistern, sitting on a slight rise approximately a quarter mile from the river.

From the mixed period of artifacts coming out of the Johnson's Station site, it appears that in addition to the Butterfield and cavalry period of 1857 – 1882 at least one period in the late 1880s or 90s this location must have been continuously occupied. This may have been by the original partner of the current landowner's grandfather at the time of purchase. The current landowner's grandfather lived in the town with his wife and family before moving out to the ranch, probably after construction of the main ranch headquarters.

Satellite Imagery Interpretation

The advent of publicly accessible satellite imagery via Google Earth played a crucial role in finding and interpreting this particular site. First, it helped find it by being able to follow the Butterfield Trail, something previously unavailable through other means.

A thorough study of the trail was incorporated into the research to properly correlate the data. This information was correlated to first-hand accounts in Fort Concho records, published stories by stage passengers or station keepers, or former studies from other historians. The trail was followed back to the North Concho River crossing (Figure 8) and then from Fort Chadbourne down through the Grape Creek Station location and to the north side of the North Concho Crossing (Figure 9). Measurements of the distances were noted and compared to published accounts to ensure the accuracy of the trail interpretation. All published accounts of distance were within a mile of the measured distances.

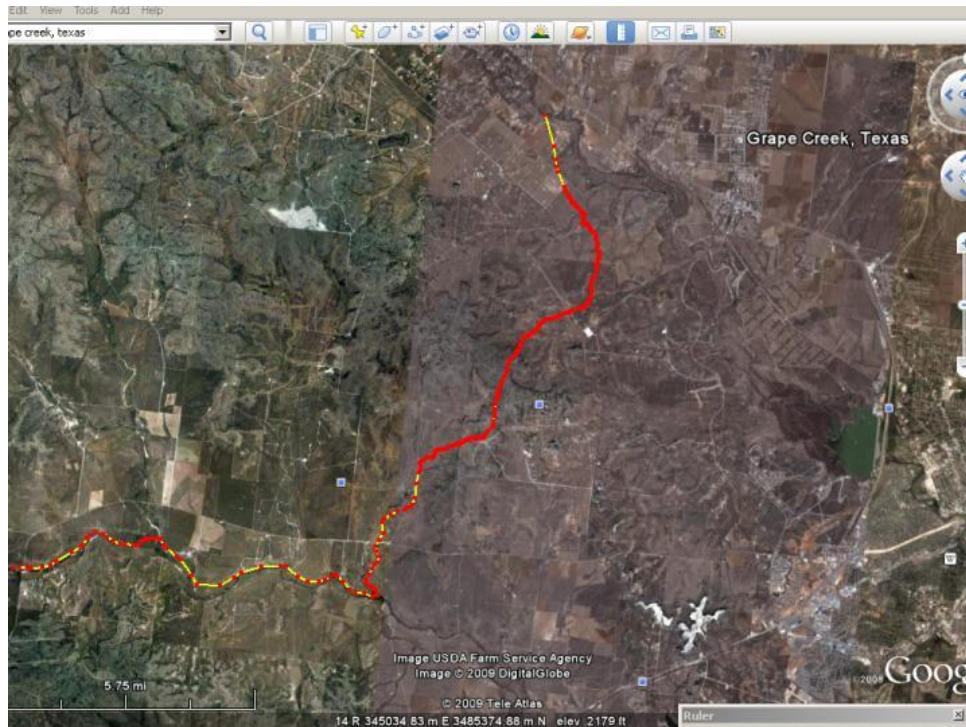


Figure 8: Butterfield Trail, Middle Concho, Brushy Creek to North Concho crossing (Google Earth)

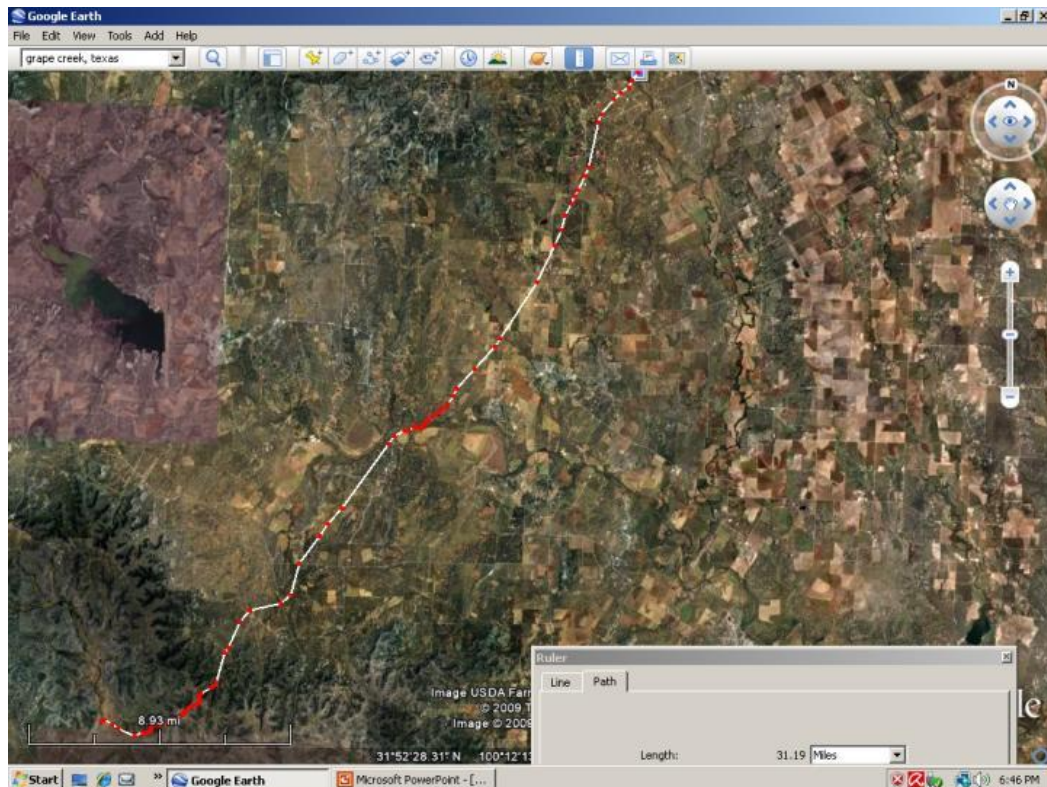


Figure 9: Butterfield Trail, Fort Chadbourne south to Grape Creek Station (Google Earth)

Satellite imagery interpretation can also show outlines of areas that may have been disturbed on the ground by either a buildings or by constant use over a period of time (i.e. corral or

trail). These are areas where the earth was severely disturbed. In these cases, you often cannot see the area outline on the ground, even when you are standing right on it and know of its existence. A good example of this is a corral area. If a corral was in existence for a good deal of time the area was severely impacted and even hundreds of years will not be enough to recover. However, only through satellite imagery can this be seen. Once you know this and know what to look for you can find similar areas at other locations. To prove this, a study was conducted to discern the corral areas at three other station/picket outpost locations: Camp Charlotte, Head of the Concho, and Grape Creek Station (Figures 10, 11, 12).

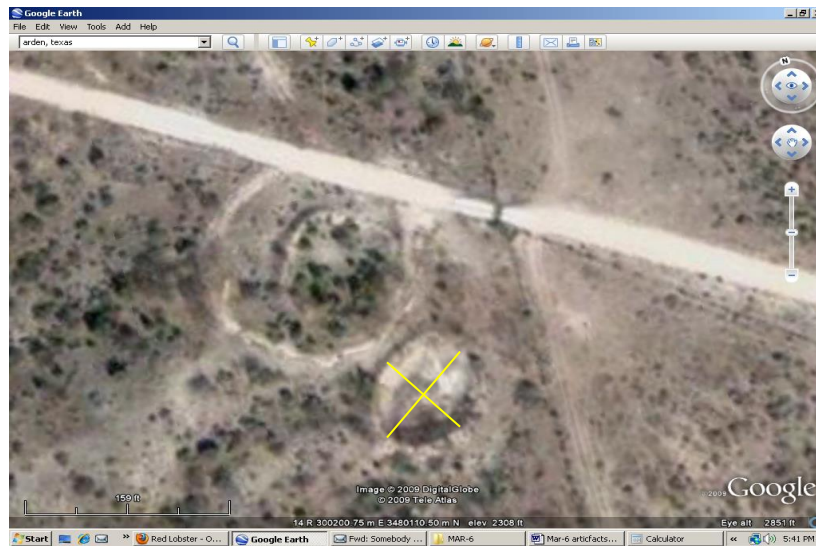


Figure 10: Camp Charlotte (Google Earth)

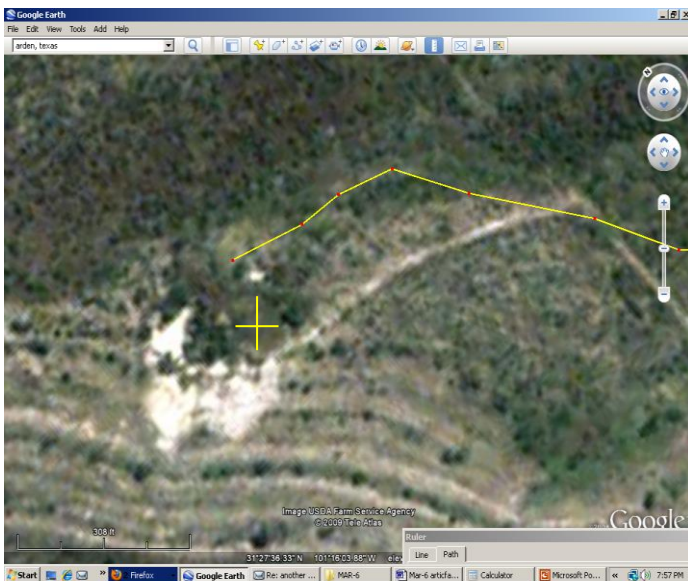


Figure 11: Head of the Concho Station

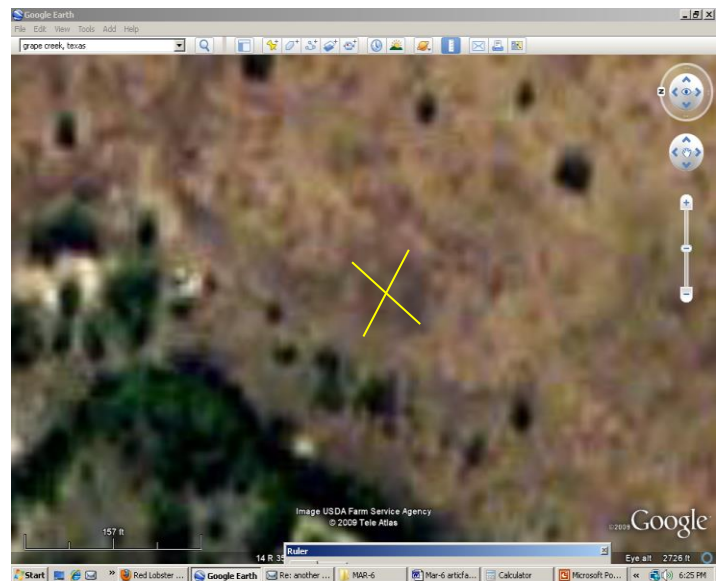


Figure 12: Grape Creek Station

(Google Earth)

With this information on what to look for, an imagery search of the Johnson's Station area revealed earth disturbances, leaving the impression of a building and a corral area (Figure 13). The building measures 35 X 55 feet and is on a north/south axis. The corral measured 65 X 65 feet. The Johnson's Station building was said to be a double log cabin with a 10-

foot wide dog trot. One side was used as living quarters and the other as a kitchen area. (Wilbarger) These type buildings were very common in early Texas. CVAS excavated a building at Fort Chadbourne in 2008 with the same design and nearly the same dimensions. They were the officer's quarters and the outer foundation boundary measured 51 feet, 8 inches by 33 feet, 4 inches with a 10-foot wide dog trot in the middle. Each side of that building was divided into two rooms. The larger of the two contained a fireplace built on the inside of the room. (Riemenschneider) An important fact to consider in the validity of the imagery impression was the structure's orientation. It should fit with the prevailing winds for the dogtrot area. The prevailing winds in West Texas are from the southwest. However, since this building is just north of a large stand of trees, the prevailing wind in this area is more from the west, making this a logical choice for the building axis. The building would also be facing the corral and trail.



Figure 13: Johnson's Station building and corral area via satellite imagery (Google Earth)

For the construction of the log cabin, the area was close to a large stand of Pecan trees that probably provided the wood for the buildings. For foundation and fireplace stones, large hills of sandstone and limestone can be found within a mile along the river (Figure 14).



Figure 14: One of several hills nearby with large limestone and sandstone

Butterfield Trail and Fort Stockton/El Paso Mail Road

Interpreting the two major trails through the area was as important as the station location itself. In addition to helping determine the likely location of the station, the trails helped to confirm it since they had to run right through or past the station location.

Two trails run along the Middle Concho River. Fort Concho records revealed that a second trail was built by the military to ease the travel on the wagons and shorten the distances. Soldiers referred to this second trail as either the Fort Stockton Road or the El Paso Mail Road. Some current topographical maps list this trail as the Butterfield Trail. However, the Butterfield Trail followed the winding river and the newer trail was very straight and usually ran about a half mile away from the river. The two come within 300 feet of each other in the area of the original Johnson's Station. There is a deviation of the newer trail at that point that goes to the station. In the area of the newer Johnson's Station upriver, the trails merged, and from that point west it remains the same trail as the original Butterfield Trail. The newer section of the trail shortcuts the older Butterfield Trail.

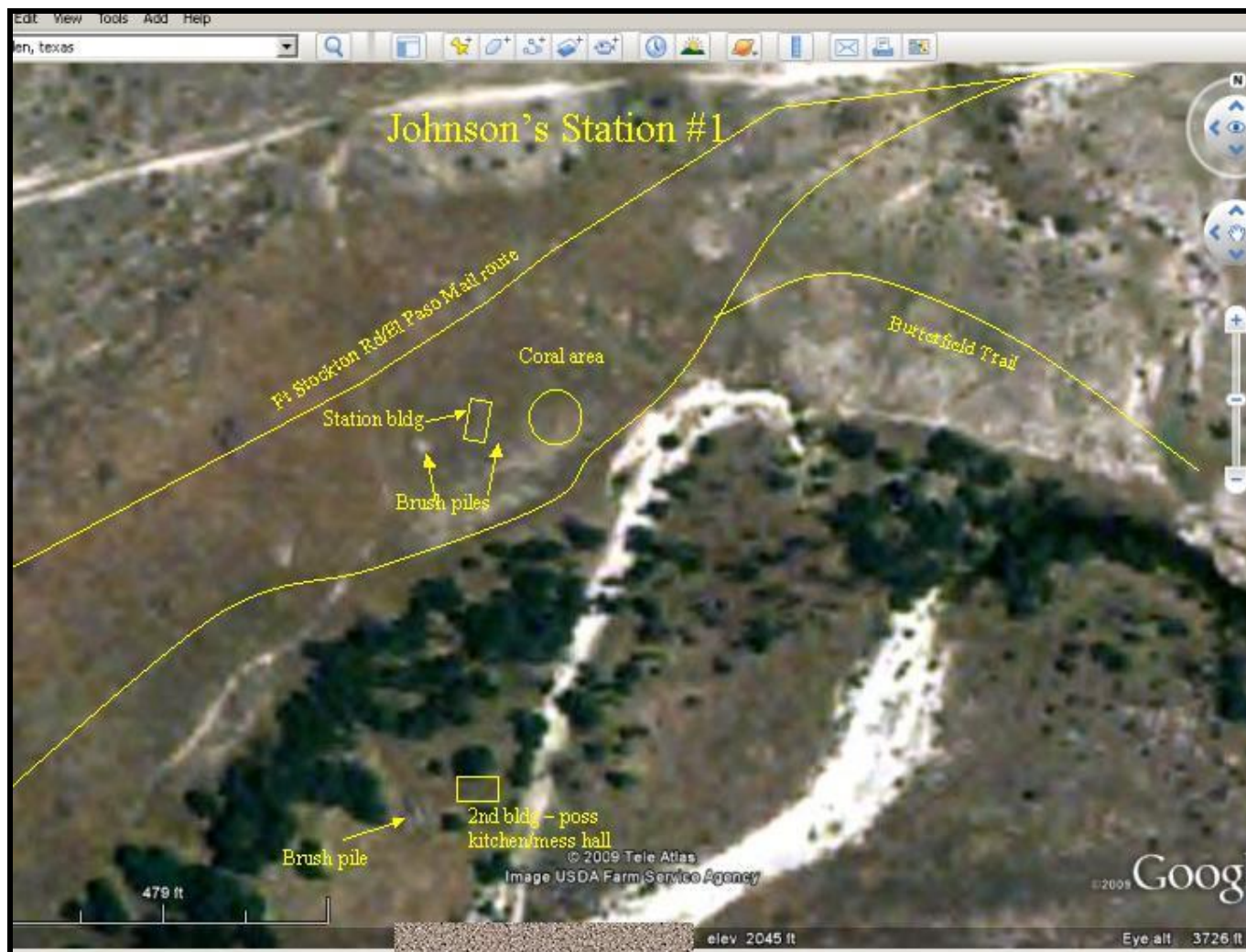


Figure 15: Two trails passing Johnson's Station (Google Earth)

Archeological Investigation

After gathering all the information on the history of Johnson's Station, and determining the probable area, two possible locations identified through satellite imagery were visited. The first site immediately showed possibilities due to whiteware pieces, unidentified metal pieces and many stones scattered around that looked to have been used for a building's fireplace. Additionally, a brush pile nearby contained larger stones with a very obvious reddish tone from heating. This location was 325 feet from the Butterfield Trail in a treed area next to the river (Figures 16, 17, 18).



**Figure 16: Area of first building location discovery
(generally where the dead tree currently lies)**



Figures 17,18: Large sandstone block (left) scattered stones (right) as first found at second building area



Figures 19,20: Fired sandstone found at each end and throughout the building perimeter



Figure 21: Unearthed cornerstone used for footing of pier and beam construction

A metal detector search of the area garnered square nails and what looked to be pieces of cast iron cookware. In addition to beginning a metal detecting survey at this location a second location along the Butterfield Trail, some 300 feet on the other side of the treed area, was surveyed. A military-issued .50-70 cartridge found at this location spurred a more thorough search. Many items were scattered throughout the area and an artifact mapping regimen ensued. This turned out to be the main area of this site. Again, there were brush piles in the area due to brush clearing by the ranch, so it could not be determined exactly where any particular item was originally laid. Large stones were again found near the brush piles that had probably been pushed by bulldozers. These stones were large limestone and not natural to the immediate area. They were large enough to be cornerstones for a pier and beam log cabin construction (Figures 19, 20, 21, 22).



Figure 22: Unearthed limestone probably used for footings of pier and beam construction

A metal-detecting search of the identified area revealed a good number of objects, many of which were within or around the perimeter of the bounded area later identified as a probable building site through imagery interpretation. Artifacts found in the area were either surface finds or averaged 3 – 6 inches in depth. Many of the objects were building-related (e.g. square nails, large wood staples). Other objects included cooking and eating utensils as well as military and civilian cartridges. Interestingly, a metal-detecting search of the corral area (also determined through imagery interpretation) found nothing, which also helped substantiate the imagery interpretation of that location.

The Concho Valley Archeological Society members later began large-scale screen sifting and metal detecting, finding hundreds of items (Figures 23, 24, 25, 26).



Figure 25: Screen Sifting Brush Pile



Figure 24: Metal Detecting



Figure 25: Screen Sifting Brush Piles

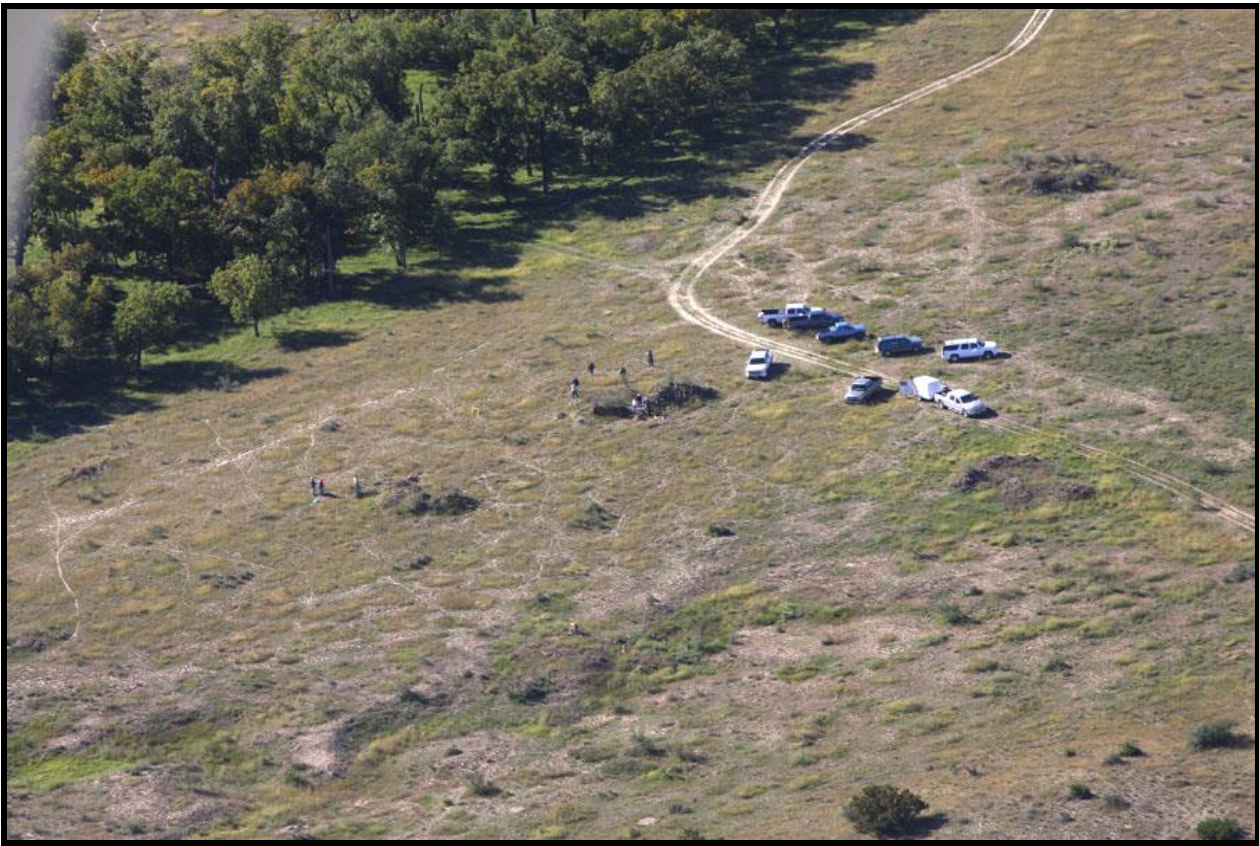


Figure 26: 41IR123 Site – aerial view CVAS crews metal detecting

Some of the items found at the main area were consistent with the late 1860s and early 1870s, civilian and military. Many items just could not be tied down to one period or another. It appeared this site covered multiple periods of occupation (Butterfield Overland Mail, 1860s & 70s U.S. Cavalry, 1870s & 80s civilian, and 1890s & early 1900s homesteading). The secondary building, located 225 feet away in the trees, probably had some relationship during one of these periods. The entire area covered approximately five acres.

The first building site found is located 500 feet from the main station area on the south side of a pecan grove that runs between the two locations. This location was likely well within the flood zone of two major floods of the 1900s. It is within 300 feet of the riverbed. This area was also cleared of mesquite and pushed into brush piles for ranching purposes. However, the site contained numerous square nails. These, along with the distribution of scattered rock and other artifacts found, could be discerned to be a pattern of a rectangular-shaped building approximately 35 X 55 feet. These are the same dimensions as the first building.

Results of the Archeological Investigation

Although seemingly less significant, square nails played a major role in determining the location, size, and likely structure of the two buildings at this site. As explained previously, the original site location and at least one of the building structure locations and dimensions were originally determined through satellite imagery interpretation. Although many of the artifacts were moved through previous bulldozing of the area, the number of nails helped support the likelihood these structures were of log construction and the patterns were enough to discern the likely orientation and size of the structures. Nail sizes varied from very small to very large (6 inches) and every size in between. Since it appeared that large staples (usually used for fencing) were also used in these structures, those were also included in the pattern analysis.

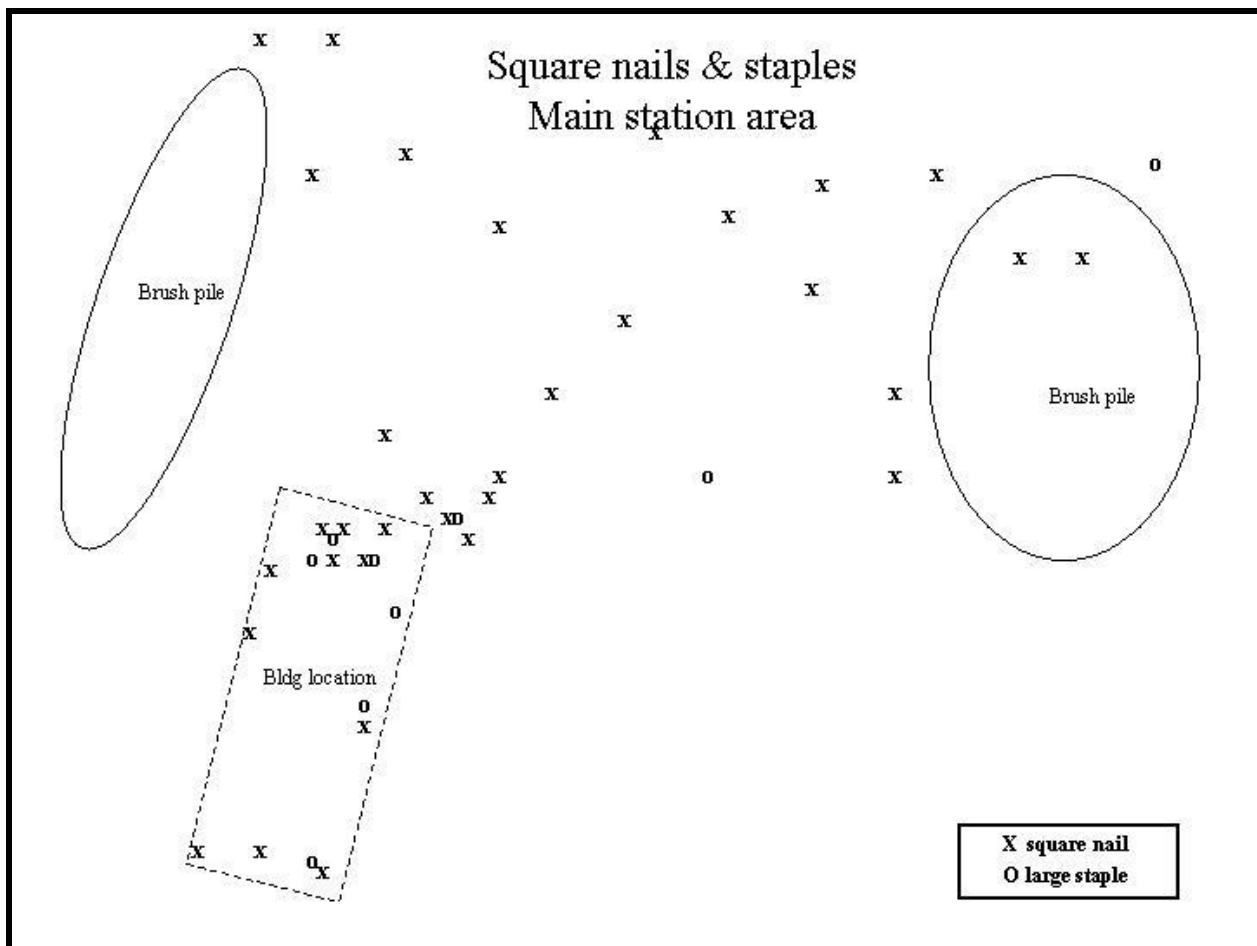


Figure 27: Square nail and staple distribution at the main site location

At the main station site, many of the nails appeared to have been randomly distributed by the bulldozing activity. However, the numbers support a probable log cabin structure and the concentration along or close to the assessed building perimeter support the building's

location, size, and orientation (Figure 27). Six round nails were also found within the site area. These probably came from the occupation during the early homesteading period. Large-scale production of round wire nails began in the U.S. in the 1880s. About 1890 wire (round) nails became more popular than cut nails in the United States. In the Far West wire nails outnumbered cut nails by about 1900. (Sutton)

At the second area building location (325 feet from the main area and on the other side of Pecan grove) there was also a concentration of square nails (Figure 28). The distribution and orientation supports the assessment that this building was of similar construction as the main area – a 35 X 55-foot double log cabin. It sits with the dog-trot facing in a north-south axis. Because this building sits to the south of the large stand of Pecan trees, this makes the dog trot faces the prevailing winds coming from the southwest. Although the only evidence is a single shotgun shell found at this site dating to the proper period of military occupation, the theory is that the Fort Chadbourne soldiers may have built this building during their six-month period of occupation in 1867. A large contingent of soldiers for a long stay would probably need a secondary structure for cooking and mess hall activities.

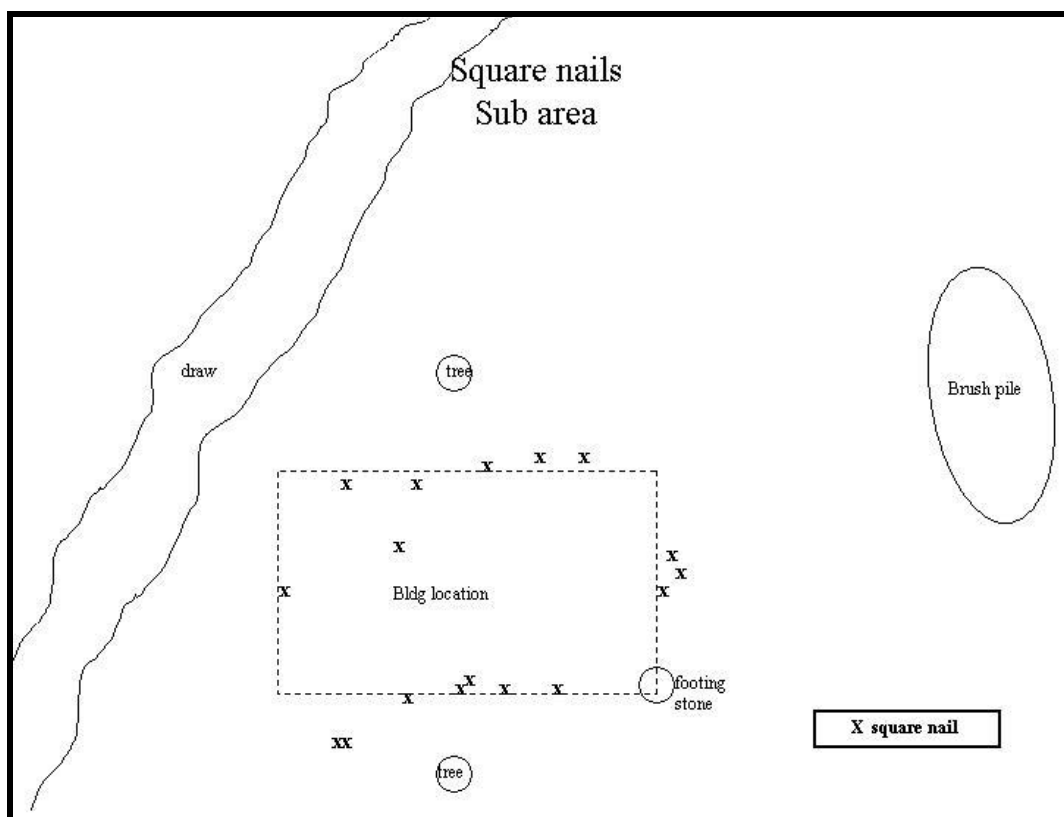


Figure 28: Square nail distribution at building #2 location

A second pattern analysis could be conducted with the relatively numerous cartridges found at the main building location (Figure 29). Once again the pattern showed a correlation to the station cabin location, size, and orientation as interpreted through satellite imagery. The most numerous of these cartridges found around the building perimeter were the Sharps 45-110/45-100, unstamped 44-40, and the military 50-70. It is hard to accurately assess what all

the firing was being conducted for. It is possible that buffalo/deer hunting was taking place, but it seems unlikely to be taking place from an occupied building and with such numbers and variety of cartridges. Given the numerous reported encounters with hostile Comanche Indians in the area during the Fort Chadbourne and Fort Concho cavalry period it is not too big of a leap to theorize that occupants at this location often believed they were defending themselves from hostile bands of Indians. However, cavalry units officially reported none of these types of encounters from this location. A possibility could be that night guards - military or civilian - used a 'shoot first, ask questions later' approach when encountering any perceived encroachment on their camp, whether it be actual or imagined.

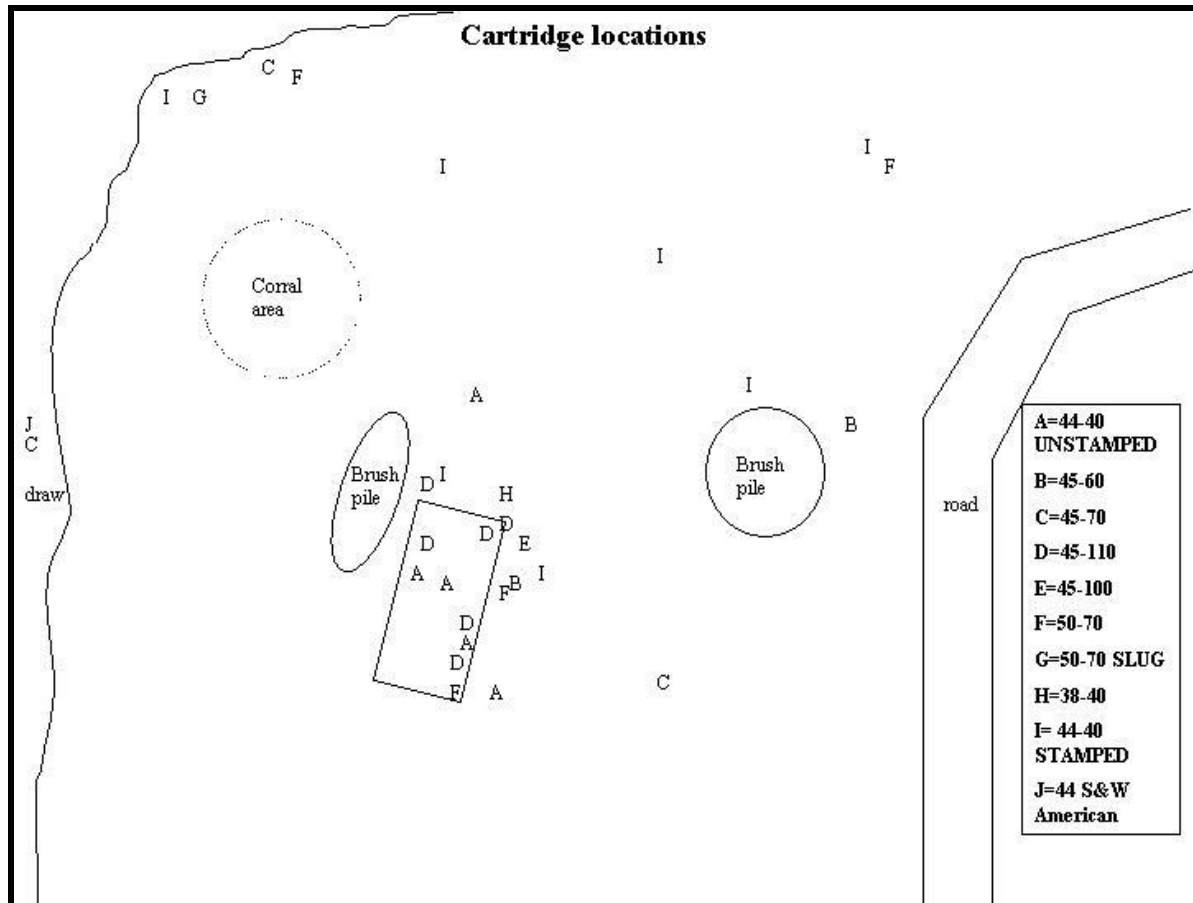


Figure 29: Cartridge distribution at the main site location

Although many of the artifacts are general in nature and cannot be tied directly to one period or another, some of them can be assumed to be from four specific periods of occupation (i.e. Butterfield Overland Mail, U.S. Cavalry, possible buffalo hunter camp, and ranching).

Butterfield Overland Mail Period

One 54-caliber round ball was found on a rise above the main site area, approximately 350 feet away from the building location (Figure 30). The ball was probably dropped. The seam is very apparent and the cut from the mold. The ball is uneven, measuring from .501 to .540 inches, with the most common measurements being between .520 and .530 inches. The 54-

caliber flintlock (Figure 31) was a common trade gun for the Indians and this ball could well have come from one of the two documented times Comanche Indians attacked the stage station. Additionally, a 4.25 X .5 inch thin strip of lead was found about 240 yards from the station. This was probably to be used for making of lead ball and dropped from a pouch.

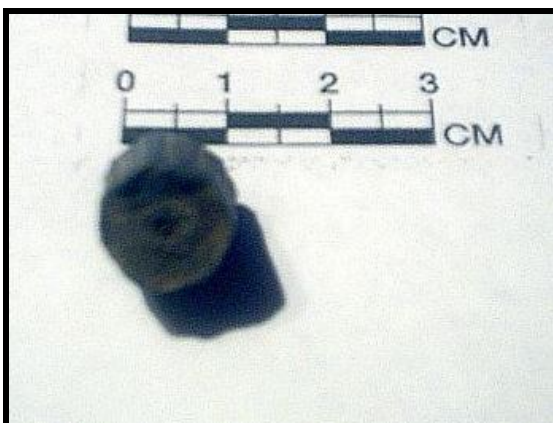


Figure 30: .54 caliber round ball



Figure 31: typical .54 caliber flintlock Indian trade gun (www.apacheria.com)

Another unusual lead bullet from a probable percussion pistol was found on the Butterfield Trail leading up to the station, approximately 550 feet out. It has an unusual hexagonal shape with straight grooves running lengthwise of the bullet. The diameter ranges between .442 and .445 inches (Figures 32, 33).



Figures 32,33: hexagonal shaped bullet

The length and weight are almost half of the famous Whitworth hexagonal rifle bullet from the Civil War, so it must have come from a pistol. The only pistol we've been able to find in the research that fits this bullet is a double-barreled percussion boot pistol (Figure 34). This pistol would be of the type possibly carried by persons during the Butterfield Overland Mail stagecoach period.



Figure 34: This double-barreled boot pistol with hexagonal bores is 6.5 inches long with a 3.5-inch barrel. The hexagon barrel is $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, which fits the hexagonal bullet found along the Butterfield Trail.

A very large tin spout canteen dug up in the area of the main site cannot be matched with any known military canteen of the period. The depth was much deeper than any other artifacts excavated, indicating it was discarded much earlier than most of the artifacts. It is an unusual 12 inches in diameter and probably held two quarts of water. It has a tin spout. The tin spout canteen was popular before and throughout the Civil War. The tin spout was soldered onto the canteen and was well-known for failure. Later the spouts were made of pewter. Although this canteen was constructed of the two pie-shaped pieces soldered together, the spout is offset from the seam rather than soldered on the seam. Due to the size, it was probably carried on wagons rather than by horse. The stage drivers of the Butterfield Overland Mail carried their own personal canteen and each passenger was allowed one personal canteen to carry. Since they were passing long distances across very dry country the canteens would have had to be as large as possible. This may have been one carried by either the driver or a passenger that failed and was thrown away at the station Figures 35, 36, 37).



Figures 35,36: excavated 12-inch canteen



Figure 37: 12-inch tin spout canteen

U.S. Cavalry Period (1867 – 1882)

The .50-70 and the .45-70 cartridges found at this site are one of the most direct connections to the U.S. Cavalry occupying this location. The .50-70 Government cartridge was a black powder round adopted in 1866 for the US Springfield Model 1866 Trapdoor Rifle. The cartridge became the official Government cartridge of the US military until replaced by the .45-70 in 1873. Two types of .50-70 cartridges were found. Two cartridges were internally primed Benet cup and likely fired by a Model 1868 or 1870 Springfield or Remington carbine (Figure 38). This is based on the lack of firing pin drag common to the Sharps carbine. One cartridge is a Remington-made Berdan cartridge, externally primed brass with a

raised ring (Figure 39). The firing pin markings show this was fired from a different rifle than the Sharps, but identification could not be determined.



Figures 38,39: .50-70: internally primed Benet cup Remington Berdan cartridge

One 50 caliber slug was also found that was mushroomed close to where the first .50-70 cartridge was found (Figure 40).



Figure 40: .50 caliber bullet found not far from .50-70 cartridge

A 10-gauge shotgun shell stamped UMC CO No 10 was uncovered at the site of the second building (Figure 41). In 1873, UMC acquired the patent rights to the C.D. Leet Company's paper shotshells and began manufacturing primed but unloaded paper shotshells in 10- and 12-gauge loads. During the 1800s shotguns were a popular weapon employed by cavalry units. Cavalry units on both sides of the American Civil War employed shotguns. American cavalry (military as well as Texas Rangers) went on to use the shotgun extensively during the Indian Wars. Horseback units favored the shotgun for its ease of aiming and devastating close-range firepower.



Figure 41: UMC No 10 shotgun shell

Another cartridge from the U.S. Army period of occupation found here was the .44 Smith and Wesson American. The 44 S&W American was one of the earliest American center-fire revolver cartridges. It was used in the S&W single-action Model 3 revolver. It is known to have been in use late in 1870 and was probably introduced as early as 1869. The U.S. Army used this cartridge and revolver until 1873. (Barnes) When it was introduced, many officers and enlisted men preferred the Smith & Wesson No. 3 to the much slower-to-load Colt Model of 1860 .44 cap and ball. While the US Army bought about 2,000 No.3 for issue, large numbers were also privately purchased by the troops. The Model No. 3 S&W was carried in many engagements against the Indians, long before the Colt was finally issued. According to 1874 ordnance returns the 4th Cavalry still had a few .44 Smith & Wesson revolvers in use at the time. (Cruse)

Sitting on top of one of the brush piles and next to the mail building site was an M1858 cavalry canteen (Figure 42). A pewter spout for this canteen was located approximately 200 feet away. Two one-inch roller buckles, commonly used on the M1858 canteen leather sling were also found (Figure 43) - one at each of the building site locations. Finding one of these buckles at the second building location helps support the theory that this second building may have been built by soldiers during the early 1867 six-month occupation period. The canteen leather straps were on all pre-1862 canteen issues. After that, they went to cloth straps.



Figures 42,43: M1858 canteen and buckles commonly used for leather canteen slings



Figure 44: for comparison – M1858 canteen (www.lazyjacks.org.uk)

A military knapsack brad similar to those found at many Civil War and Indian war battle sites was also found (Figure 45).



Figure 45: Knapsack brad adjustment

The lead-soldered lap side seam No.2 cans like this were common for army provisions (figure 46). Many of these cans were found on this site and are of the same type found and reported on from the Battle of Red River site and Indian Village 41B1544 in Tule Canyon (Cruse).



Figure 46: lead-soldered lap side seam No.2 can

We found a Confederate-made eight-bar curry comb (Figure 47), of the same type found at the Battle of Red River site and Indian Village site 41BI544 in Tule Canyon and additionally excavated in Tennessee at a Civil War battle site and displayed in the book 'Confederate Saddles and Horse Equipment,' by William Stone. Each cavalry soldier was required to carry a currycomb like this in his saddlebag. (Cruse).



Figure 47: Confederate-made cavalry eight-bar curry comb

One unstamped .45-70 or .45-55 (Figure 48) (the only difference was the number of grains internally) and two stamped cartridges were found at the site (Figures 49,50). The headstamp on the first one indicates it is a Carbine cartridge made at the Frankford Arsenal in March (3rd month) of 1878. The second headstamp indicates that it was a Rifle cartridge made by

the Union Metallic Cartridge Company of Bridgeport, Conn in October of 1878. Also, the two fired cartridges were crushed, indicating they were probably military. Crushing cartridges was a common practice to ensure Indians could not reuse the cartridges found on the battlefield. The military was concerned that Indians were reloading .45-70 and .50-70 cartridge cases that were discarded by the Army. This would have been accomplished by inserting a percussion cap in a hole punched in the base of the copper case, filling the case with black powder, and inserting either a newly cast or a reclaimed bullet. The practice of crushing cartridges was officially endorsed by the War Department in General Order 13, Feb 16th, 1876.



Figure 48: .45-70 cartridge



Figure 49: unfired Benet primed .45-70



Figure 50: stamped Berdan primed .45-70

The three 45-70/55 cartridges were found at areas suggesting outer perimeter guard positions (Figure 51). This theory is supported by a number of tin cans found near the cartridge locations. These perimeter positions also suggest military cavalry patrol using this site as a camp.

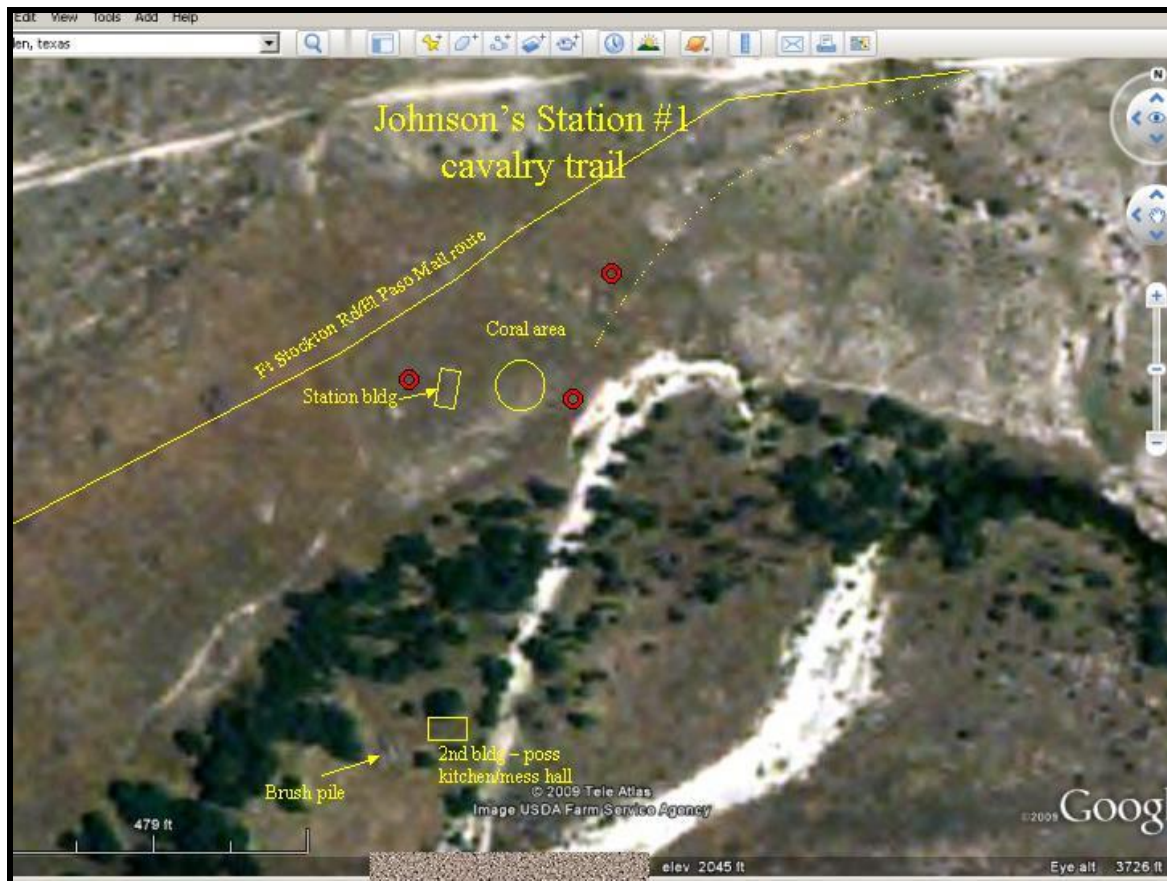


Figure 51: perimeter guard positions (Google Earth)

Possible Buffalo Hunter Camp

One .45-100 (also known as 45-2.4"), one either .45-100 or .45-110 (also known as 45-2 7/8"), and five .45-110 and cartridges were found at this site (Figure 52). All these cartridges were unstamped. The .45-100 is fired. One .45-110 is fired and one is unfired. Four look to be unfired reloads with replaced primers (Figure 53). These replaced primers had marks on them that were probably made by the priming punch used to seat them into place. Possibly related to this, a modified piece of heavy gauge wire that may have been a decapping tool was unearthed nearby (Figure 54). This could have been used to remove the old primers after being drilled.



Figure 52: Sharps 45-110 (left), Sharps 45-100 (middle), two .45-110 one .45-100/110 (right)



Figure 53: .45-110 re-primed cartridge

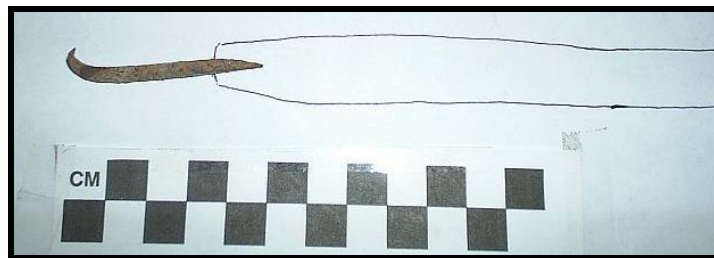


Figure 54: This was made from a piece of heavy wire and may be a primer decapping tool

The .45-110 Sharps was introduced in 1876 and the .45-100 were added at the end of 1876. The .45-100/110 were widely used by buffalo hunters at the time. Also, two unstamped .44-60 probable Sharps cartridges with Berdan primers were found at the site – both fired. This cartridge was used in the Sharps Model 1874 and also used for large game and buffalo hunting. The .44-60 Peabody 'Creedmoor' and Winchester rounds were identical apart from designation but were limited in popularity. The Sharps cartridge was introduced in 1869, Winchester in 1874-75, and Peabody 'Creedmoor' in 1877-78. (Barnes)

Buffalo hunters probably used this unoccupied site as a base camp for a period of time in the 1876 and 1877 timeframe. The buffalo had been visiting the area in the fall of each year for many years. Captain R.G. Carter of the 4th U.S. Cavalry, recalled in 1876 countless herds of buffalo in the area between Twin Mountains, not far from this location, and the fort. (Hurt) An immense slaughter of buffalo occurred around San Angelo between 1874 and the winter of 1877. In 1877 a particularly hard winter forced the bison from the area. (Nickels) A survey party scouting the route through the area for the Texas Western Railway in 1876 reported as many as 30,000 in the area. The herd was so large it took the two men over an hour to ride through the herd. The outfit of Bishop and Sullivan was known to operate a buffalo-hunting outfit along the Middle Concho in 1876. William Kelly financed another outfit known to work in the area. His six-man team reportedly killed a thousand buffalo during the 1876 season. (Tom Green)

Ranching Period

A few of the items found pointed directly to a period much later than either the Butterfield, military, or buffalo hunter encampment period. For example, barbed wire of two kinds were found. One was common to the late 1800s/early 1900s but not unique enough to make a true period interpretation. The second was identifiable as the Scutt Arrow Plate (Figure 55). It is a variation of a patent called the Scutt Single H Plate that was patented in 1878.



Figure 55: Scutt Arrow Plate barbed wire

A suspender clip stamped 'Paris' came from the ranching period. Paris suspenders were made by the A. Stein & Company, which was established in 1887 and incorporated in Illinois in February 1909. The company manufactured garters, suspenders, rubber sundries, and other products of elastic webbing under the trade names "Paris," "Ivory," and "Hickory."

A 12-gauge shotgun shell, marked REM-UMC NITRO CLUB 12 comes from the post-1911 period. Another 12-gauge Winchester shotgun shell, marked LEADER comes from a period of 1894 to 1936.

Four Winchester .44 caliber cartridges stamped 44 WCF, w.r.a.co were found scattered. This cartridge was first offered by the Winchester Company beginning in 1886. Hunting or protecting sheep from predators might have been behind these particular cartridges in this area during the early ranching period.

Window glass was found throughout the area near the building location. Window glass would most likely have been installed in the late 1800s or early 1900s.

Experts at Texas Wagon Works (Gonzalez, TX), Witmer Coach Shop (New Holland, PA), and Bar E Ranch Wagon Restoration (Clinton, AK) all identified this 14-inch threaded bolt found at this site as a bolt for a box buggy/buckboard (Figure 56). Four of these bolts held

the passenger seat board to the body of the buggy box by extending vertically through the seat board and continuing through the floor frame of the box body (Figure 57). The length of the bolt plus the height of the seat cushion would give the total height of the seat to allow the passenger leg room for their legs to be down in the setting position.



Figure 56: 14-inch threaded bolt for box buggy seat



Figure 57: Box buggy (tucsonrodeoparade.org)

This piece is broken at the top where it begins to curve to what looks to have been a 90-degree angle. It has the capital letter B embossed on it. This appears to be a wall-mounted bottle opener from the turn of the century. It fits the cap of a bottle perfectly. After the first effective bottle cap was patented in 1894, people began designing devices to get them open, including the wall-mounted variety.



Figure 58: probable broken wall-mounted bottle opener

The B probably stands for the Betz Brewing Company, established in 1868 and went out of business in the 1930s. Note the similarity in the style of the B (Figures 58, 59).

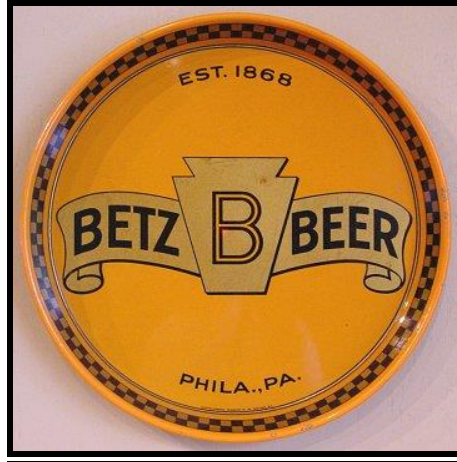


Figure 59: Betz Beer Company beer cap (www.trayman.net)

Non-specific Period Artifacts

Artifacts that could have come from any one of the periods, but could not be absolutely tied to one or the other were listed in a general category below with thoughts and comments. Many of the artifacts found at this site were very similar to those found and reported in the ‘Archeological Investigations Fort Chadbourne (41CK129) Butterfield Overland Stage Station Coke County, Texas’ (Riemenschneider).

Cartridges

Eleven unstamped .44-40 cartridges were found at the site. All have been fired and they appear to come from three different rifles, based on the firing pin strikes. The .44-40 Winchester was introduced in 1873. From 1873 to 1885 the cartridges did not have an identifying head stamp. It was the first center-fire cartridge offered by Winchester and was brought out as the standard chambering for the new Winchester Model 1873 rifle. It was also interchangeable with the Colt Army revolver, but this didn’t come until 1888.

All of these cartridges could have come from personal rifles of various cattle drives or trade/freight outfits passing through the area and using the opportunity of a roof over their head. The 44-40 were scattered much more than the other cartridges found in the area. This could have come from bulldozing the area. There’s no way to be sure of just why these particular cartridges were more scattered than the rest. Target practice is a possibility, but there may also have been a kind of defensive action against Indian raiding parties. Indian problems were still showing up in Fort Concho scouting reports well into 1879.

DOMESTIC ARTIFACTS

Household goods and hardware artifacts



Figure 60: various latches & latch bolt (stamped 117LG)



**Figure 61: top 2 rows: washtub pieces, third row: possible canteen screw cap, tin can screw cap
bottom row: door hinge pin**



Figure 62: 12-inch and 6-inch supply can lids

Recreational artifacts

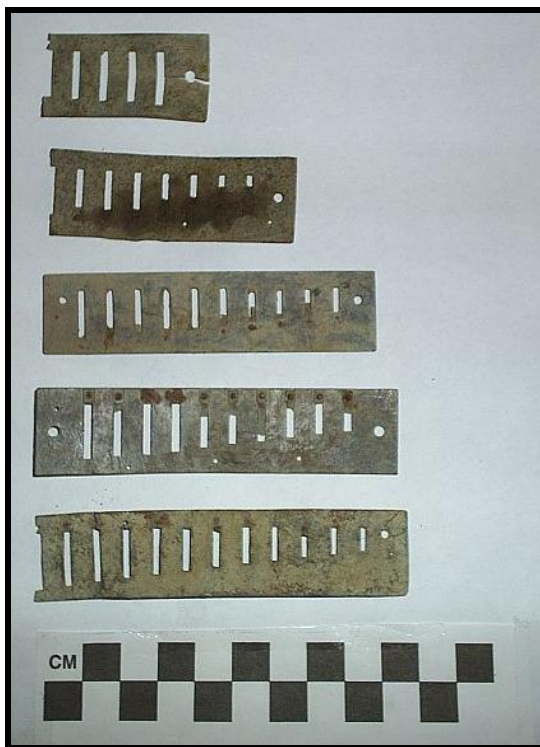


Figure 63: harmonica reeds

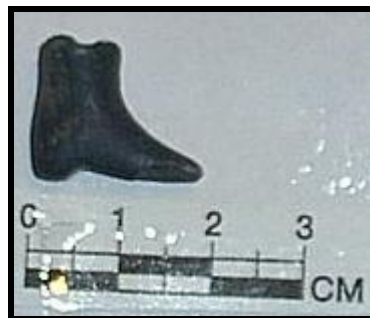


Figure 64: bisque (porcelain) doll foot

Food and beverage preparation and serving



Figure 65: spoons, salt shaker top



Figure 66: various pieces of cast iron ware



Figure 67: kitchen items (left to right)
 top: stove top lid lifter, piece cast iron tortilla skillet
 middle: dutch oven handle, pot handle
 bottom: grinding wheel (coffee), lid top hinge thumb lever



Figure 68: various pieces of crockery



Figure 69: various pieces of white-ware



Figure 70: various pieces of bottles



Figure 71: various pieces of white-ware



Figure 72: various unidentified pieces



Figure 73: probable oil lamp glass



Figure 74: Green wine bottle pieces



Figure 75: for comparison - green wine bottle dated mid to late 1800s at auction
(www.greybirdrelics.com)



Figure 76: cooking items (top to bottom: ladle strainer, cooking spoon, ladle, cooking item handle)



Figure 77: possible broken cast iron skillet handle with raised number 7

Workshop artifacts

Two seven-inch axe heads were excavated, one near the main building location and the other approximately 100 feet away. These could have been used during any of the periods of occupation, but they are easily large enough to have been used to cut down the pecan trees for building the log cabins and posts and rails for the corral area.



Figure 78: 7-inch axe heads

Transportation artifacts



Figure 79: saddle ring & broken singletree piece



Figure 80: horseshoes



Figure 81: wagon plate, possible heavy seat back iron

A martingale found at this site appears to be civilian, similar to the Texas martingales found along other cattle drive routes throughout Texas, but lacking the star in the middle, and the flourishes on this one are more elaborate.



Figure 82: Martingale

Construction artifacts



**Figure 83: construction tools (top row: lag, metal strap with rivet
middle row: nut, chuck for brace & bit, broken hand axe
bottom row: lag, bolt [squared on top])**



**Figure 84: assorted nails, staple
(left) square nails (right) round/wire nails**

Summary

Hopefully, this investigation will clarify some of the inaccuracies attributed to this site over the years. In addition to the location, it is important to delineate the difference between the first and second Johnson's Station and their general purposes. The first Johnson's Station was the only station used by the Butterfield Overland Mail and the second Johnson's Station was the only station used by the San Antonio to El Paso mail and stage line. Although the occupation for the original Johnson's Station, was not constant, it was a popular location for a variety of occupants until after the turn of the century. There are several fairly obvious reasons for this. First, it was approximately one day's ride at a slow pace from Fort Concho and San Angelo. Second, it was near water, wood, and good grazing. Third, it had a log cabin that could be used to get out of the weather and provided a certain amount of protection against Indian raiding parties.

The second building inside the Pecan grove nearby is difficult to determine exactly when and who built it. However, a process of elimination can be used to help make an assessment. First, only one building was ever mentioned for the Butterfield Overland Mail period. Second, items at that main building site, such as barbed wire, late-period cartridges, and clothing items from the late 1890s and early 1900s, suggest it was also used during the beginning of the ranching period. This leaves only one time of continuous occupancy for the second building site. That is the 6 months of continuous occupation by the companies from Fort Chadbourne in 1867. If the site needed to house up to 40 troops for six months they may have decided a second building was worth the effort. Hard structures are very important for military cooking and dining facilities and this may well have been the purpose. Unfortunately, most of this building and its contents were probably washed away during major floods in 1882 and 1936.

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