

The Jumano Pictographs at Paint Rock, Texas (41CC1)

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February 2026 (updated March
from equinox viewing)



Introduction

The Campbell family, long-time owners and preservationists of the quarter-mile-long limestone bluff covered with historic pictographs along the Concho River at Paint Rock, Texas, has long believed the pictographs were primarily created by the Jumano Indians of early Texas. The pictographs number over 1,500. Artifacts found along the front of the site indicate that it served as a camping stop as early as 1300 A.D. and continued into the early 1700s. The Paint Rock pictographs were first documented in the 1930s by A.T. Jackson and rock art illustrator Forrest Kirkland. However, to date, archaeologists have been unable to find evidence linking any of the myriad geometric designs, animal depictions, Indian imagery, or various solar markers for the solstices and equinoxes directly to the Jumano people (Houston and Simonia). Our work with the Campbell family goes back 16 years, primarily photographing the pictographs and identifying a historic camping area at the far western end of the bluff. In this report, we worked with WTAS Member Bill Campbell to provide evidential support for what the family has believed all along. Our research does not identify the Jumano with all the pictographs on the bluff. However, the history of the Jumano in this area, along with a comparison of our recent identification of Jumano pictographs at Meyers Spring, Texas, provides strong evidence that many of the bluff's depictions are by this group during the established period identified by the artifacts.

We previously determined that the story of the Lady In Blue and the 1629 meeting between the Spanish friars from New Mexico and the large Jumano gathering took place in the area now known as Caprock

Canyon State Park. We reported this in our report entitled, The Jumano Picture Story of ‘The Lady in Blue’ at Meyers Spring, Texas. (Ashmore) At the time of the gathering, the Jumano people had moved north to the summer buffalo-hunting grounds because of recent problems: a lack of game in their home territory and the drying up of their clean water sources.

In that report, we presented the pictograph story created by the Jumano people at Meyers Spring. The images of the people celebrating after the healing of their sick and lame are very distinctive. These images are key to analyzing the Paint Rock pictographs in similar celebratory settings.

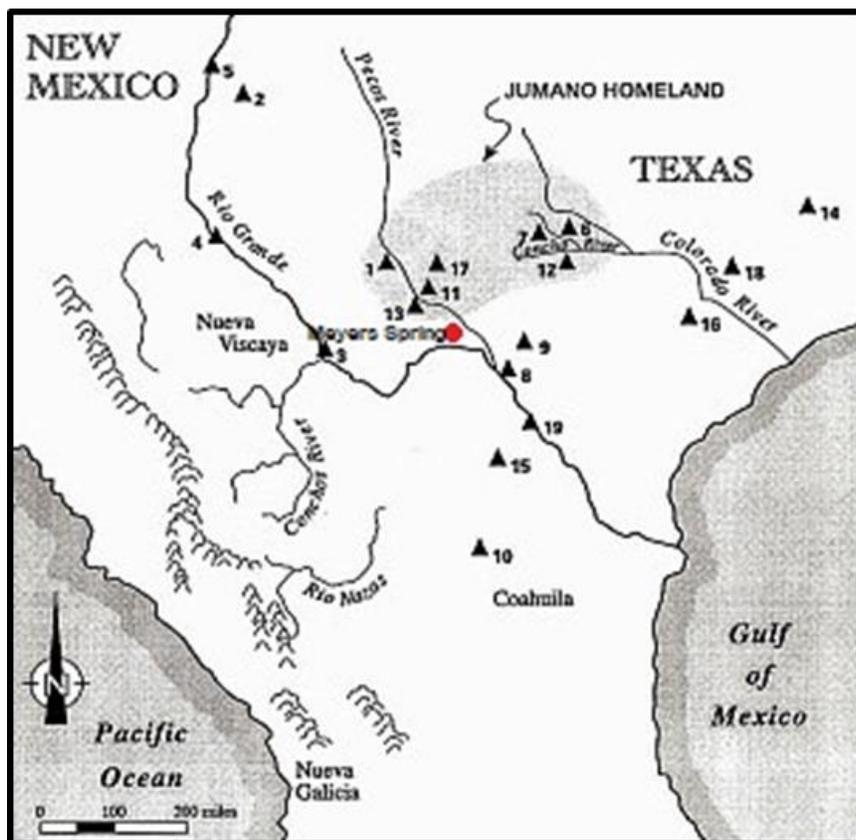


Meyers Spring pictographs in the Lower Pecos River region

History

In the early 1600s, the vast Jumano territory extended from below the Rio Grande River, south of Del Rio, and westward to the region beyond the Big Bend, Texas. There were multiple Jumano groups living in diverse areas. There were those along the Rio Grande River, from northern Mexico into northern New Mexico. This included a group living in the Coahuila area of northeastern Mexico. These people were living alongside other Indigenous groups and were mostly farmers. There was a Plains group that was mainly buffalo hunters and traders, traveling with the seasonal herd migrations. Finally, there were the Jumano living along the Texas Concho River and its tributaries. The Concho River Jumano’s eastern border was the Colorado River, and its main area of occupation was the confluence of the Concho and Colorado Rivers. In the south, Meyers Spring is situated at the center of the known Jumano territory, and served as a stopping point for Jumano people traveling back and forth from the Coahuila area of northern Mexico.

The Concho River Jumano people enjoyed the clear, spring-fed creek tributaries and the Concho River, which provided abundant fish, mollusks, deer, and other wildlife. Their seasonal harvests of pecans were unsurpassed, and the buffalo came through every winter, providing them with meat and hides. They were a blessed people, and because of their bounty. They traded their pecans, pearls from the Concho River, buffalo skins, and their powerful bows, used to take down buffalo.

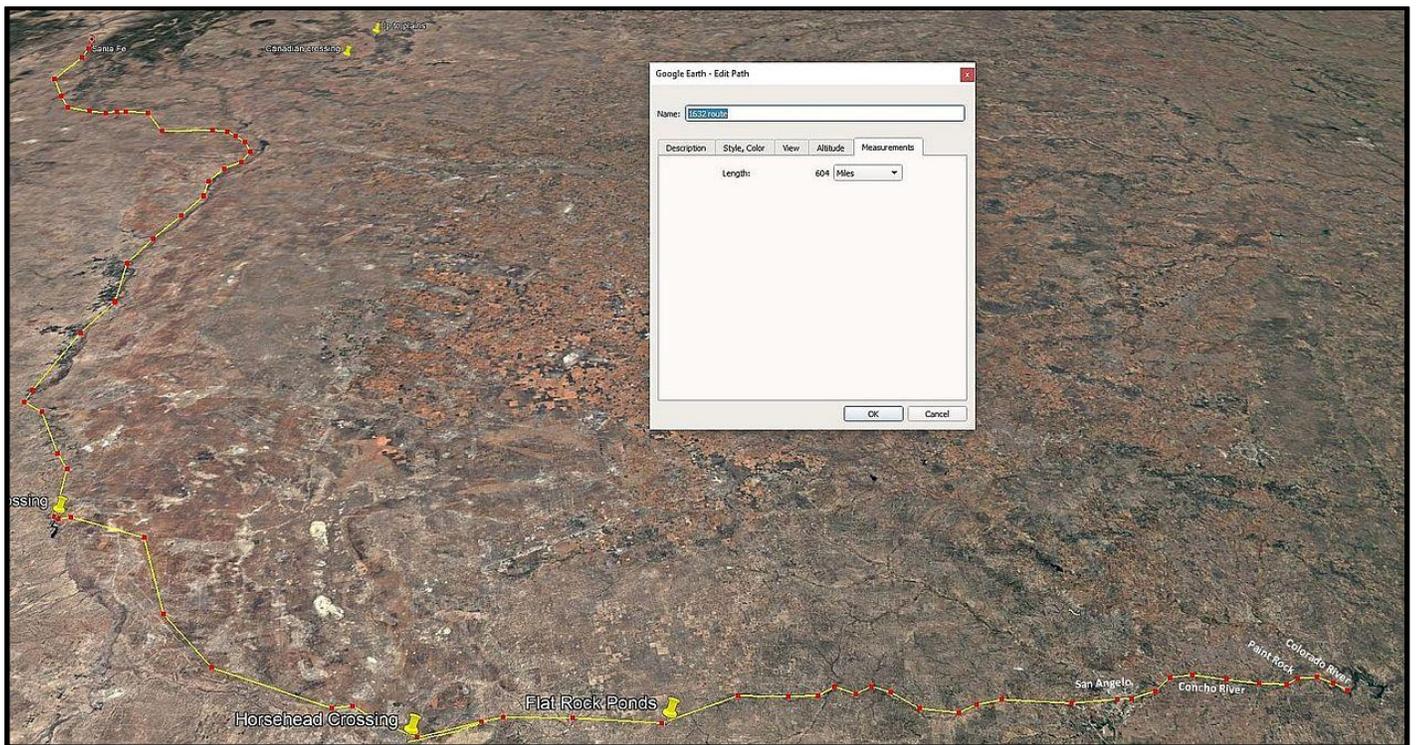


A map of the original homeland of the Jumano Indians based on early encounters with Spanish explorers. The Meyers Spring location is shown in red. (Texas Beyond History)

After the 1629 meeting, the Spanish friars in New Mexico planned to return to the Jumano territory. Their planning and approval were not completed until 1632. At this time, the Jumano people had returned from the northern hunting camps to their primary area at the confluence of the Concho and Colorado Rivers, and the Spanish travel route needed to be modified. With the help of visiting Jumano, their travel took them on the traditional trading route from Santa Fe down the Pecos River to what later became the Pecos River's Horsehead Crossing. From there, they made their way east until reaching the head of the Concho River and followed it to the mouth of the river. The Spanish documentation states that the total length of the travel route was 200 leagues, or 600 miles.

Between 1400 and 1600, the Spanish nautical league was equal to 4 Roman miles, each of 4,842 feet, for a total of 19,368 feet (5,903 meters or 3.1876 modern nautical miles). However, the accepted number of Spanish nautical leagues to a degree varied between 14 1/6 and 16 2/3, so in actual practice the length of a Spanish nautical league was 25,733 feet (4.235 modern nautical miles) to 21,874 feet (3.600 modern nautical miles) respectively. (Spence)

A Google Earth measurement shows that the route led them precisely to the confluence of the Colorado and Concho Rivers, as later Spanish expeditions to the same area also reported.



Route from Santa Fe to the confluence of the Colorado and Concho Rivers

Two friars, Fray Pedro de Ortega and Fray Ascension de Zarate, departed on the long trek, guided by Jumano and accompanied by a small contingent of soldiers. Fray Salas appeared to be part of the planning, but was not part of this mission. Fray de Zarate did not remain long with the Jumano on the “Rio de las Nueces” or River of Nuts, which the Concho was well known for. However, Fray de Ortega stayed for six months. He came to his final end there, possibly at the hands of the Jumano, rejecting his “apostolic zeal.” (Hickerson) On their journey to the Jumano village, they had to pass the Paint Rocks, a regular stopping point for the Jumano, 15 miles upstream from the main village.

Although the Jumano remained Christian in their own unique form, probably due to the miraculous teachings of the Lady in Blue, it is telling that Spanish friars made no further attempts to travel to their home territory along the Concho River after Fray de Ortega. However, in 1650, a Spanish trading expedition did reach the confluence of the two rivers. They had an amicable trading relationship and stayed for six months.

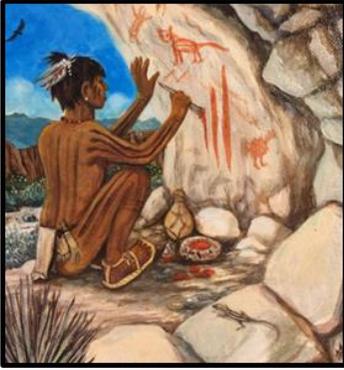
A third expedition returned to the heart of the Concho Jumano nation in 1654. This time, it was a military contingent of 30 soldiers, at the Jumano's request, for protection and to explore the area east of their Colorado River border.

Thirty years later, in 1683, the famous Mendoza expedition reached the Jumano nation's homeland. The Jumano petitioned for this expedition, stating that 10,000 souls jointly submitted the request. The petitioning Jumano explicitly stated that their home was at the junction of the Rio del Norte (Colorado River) and the Rio del Nueces (Concho River). This time, the expedition started from El Paso, by way of the Rio Grande to La Junta de los Rios (near modern Presidio, TX, and Ojinaga, Mexico), and then up to the Pecos to meet their Jumano guides. According to their report, the total distance was again 200 leagues. The general distance via the Mendoza route is 550 miles from El Paso. This breaks down to about 2.75 miles per league. In New Spain around 1680, a Spanish league was generally about 2.6 miles, though its exact length could vary slightly depending on local definitions of the vara. Thus, this distance is close to the route's projected mileage.

After the Mendoza expedition, the Jumano nation began to come apart due to Apache encroachment and hostilities. There is no definite period for the Jumano's relinquishing their territory. It is generally considered that starting around 1700, a slow but steady period began of various groups either moving farther south, being killed in battle, or being absorbed into the Apache tribes moving into the territory.

This very short synopsis provides insight into the few occasions when Spanish expeditions reached the mouth of the Concho River, passing Paint Rock over about 55 years. However, the Jumano themselves had been passing this famous formation for hundreds of years. This information is important as we look to the pictographs for indications within the pictographs that we can analyze to find direct ties to these people. Additionally, their drawings depicting their people, which correspond to the depictions studied at Meyers Spring, can now be used to support these analytical determinations.

The Pictographs



Two particular locations on the Paint Rock bluff stand out as meeting the criteria for our comparison analysis with the Meyers Spring pictographs. One area of pictograph panels depicts males, and the other area is primarily female, with a few males. The depictions in both areas are similar to the pictographs at Meyers Spring.

The Celebration Dancers

Area one shows three males. The depictions were placed above multiple rows of tally marks, some in red and some in black. Based on the many tally marks and the celebratory depictions, this may have been a main celebration area.

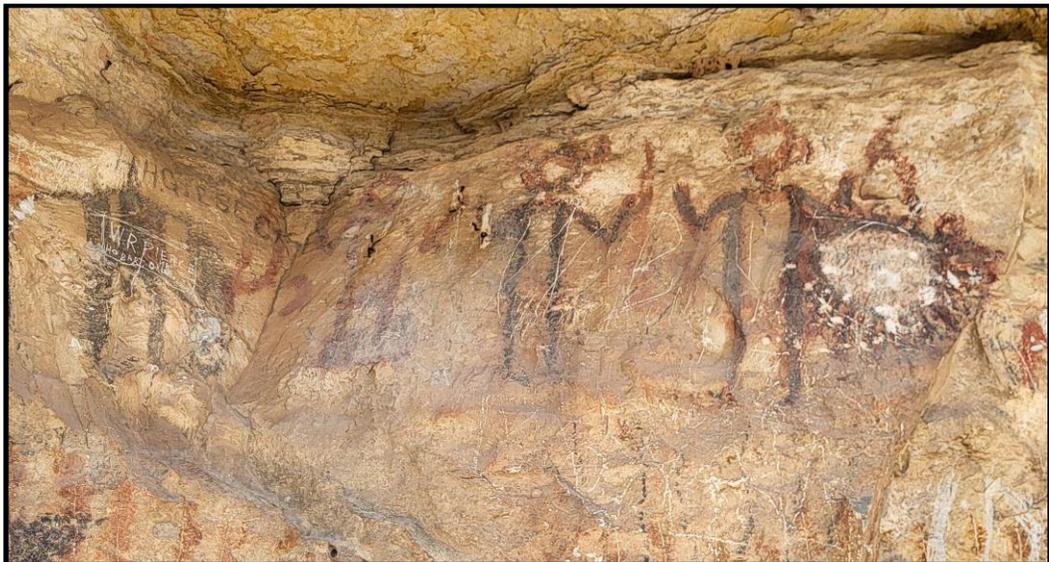
The male to the right appears to have a drum looped on his arm. Their ears are enlarged, indicating large earring decorations. They have a hair loop at the top of their heads, a Jumano tradition.



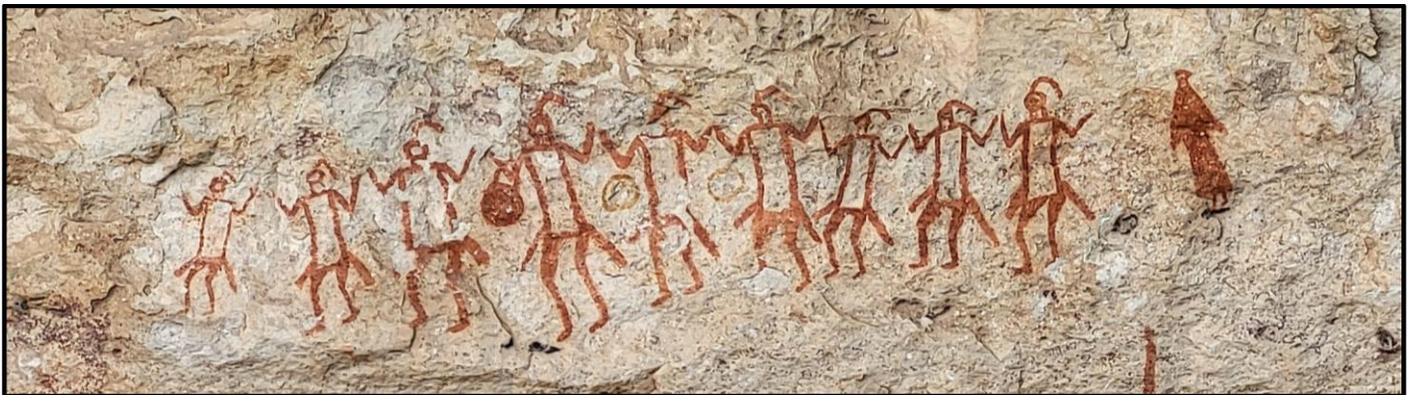
Overall image of entire area of pictographs



Close up of human figures and tally marks



Paint Rock Celebration Dancers



Meyers Spring Celebration Dancers

The drum is still carried in Puebloan/Jumano ceremonies today. The hair loop on top of the head was a well-known hairstyle among historic Jumano males.



Traditional ceremonial drum



Jumano Hair Loop

Many Jumano men in the 1600s were described as wearing large earrings, and this was notable to Spanish observers. Spanish explorers, missionaries, and chroniclers from the early mid-17th century repeatedly described Jumano males as wearing large ear ornaments, often made of shell, stone, bone, or turquoise. Having pierced ears, sometimes stretched to hold sizable pendants. One of the most cited accounts comes from Juan de Oñate's expedition (1598) and later missionaries such as Fray Alonso de Benavides, who remarked on the Jumano's distinctive appearance—especially their earrings and body decoration—which differed from those of neighboring groups. Among the Jumano (a trade-oriented people), earrings were not unusual or marginal—they were part of normal male dress. Large earrings were common across many Indigenous groups in the Southwest and Plains, so the Jumano fit into a broader regional pattern.

One hypothesis about the tally marks below the figures is that they are related to a calendric system used to track the solstices and equinoxes. The theory is that this location provided a platform for viewing the horizon from a horizon notch (the western end of the bluff) and subsequent sunrises. By one count, the section of marks just below the figures reported a total of 47. By noting the first observed sunrise at the horizon notch on November 6th, 47 sunrises would take it to the winter solstice day. (Houston and Simonia) This theory is plausible. However, it does not account for the many tally marks that extend both above and along the wall on both sides of the section with the 47 marks.

In total, there are 159 – 160 tally marks across the entire area of this pictograph site. This number cannot be precisely determined due to weather deterioration and graffiti in many places. Above the 47 is another red

row of 36. To the far right, there are 46 that include black marks along with the red. To the left, there is a line of 50 that stretches around a 90-degree angle.



Markers above and continuing to left of the 47 counted markers



Black markers to far left (some placed on top of other weathered red images)



Black and red markers to right



Markers to far right

(Note that dissolved calcium carbonate from weathering is now covering much of this section)

Another possibility for these markers is a pronouncement of important events that occurred at this location and possibly an indication of the number of people who may have participated. In the image above, one figure may represent a Spanish friar, similar to one on the wall at Meyers Spring.



Meyers Spring Spanish Friar



Paint Rock image

If this is the case, the black markers may indicate that Europeans (Spanish) were recorded during some expeditions to the downstream Jumano home. As with all pictographs, everything is interpretation. Thus, the solar marker theory and the pronouncement of important events and participants are both possible. Or it could be a third option we have yet to understand.

The Woman Celebration Panels

1. The second area is 60 yards further down the bluff, at the far west end. This area has two panels that appear to be telling female stories, and one solar marker panel above them. In this case, we have the benefit of Forrest Kirkland's 1935 drawings to see the details that are slowly fading.



The lower panel appears to tell a story of an important female's death. An upside-down figure represents death. This is common throughout pictographs in the Southwest. (Patterson, Death Symbol) The other females appear to be honoring her passing with ceremony. There appears to be one male included. This could be representing a male shaman or a spirit, as it appears to be depicting a floating being. Some have interpreted this as a headless being, but this is due to rock spalling. On each side are women that look to be holding possibly gourd rattles. Next to the death depiction, the woman figure does not have regular legs. She instead has a zigzag line below the body. Our interpretation is that this is representing the spirit form

rising after death of the body. The spirit body appears to be helped by another female, but with legs and another gourd in hand. This could represent a female shaman, or medicine woman.

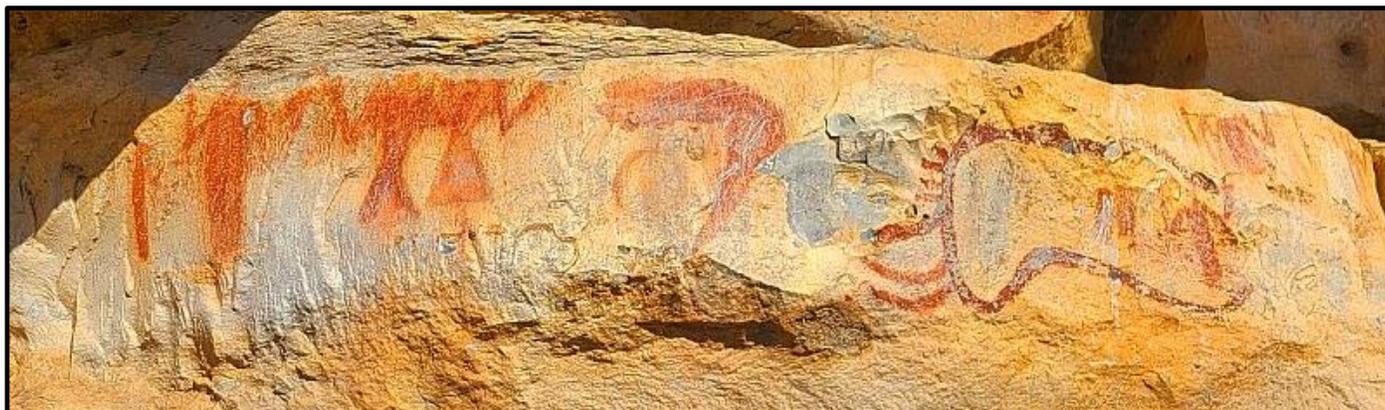
Rattle gourds have been used for millennia, and are still used today in ceremony. They are used to 1) awaked and call on the Good Spirits, 2) to bless the ground and surrounding space, 3) to drive bad spirits away.

Based on this interpretation, we are calling this the *'To-Spirit-From-Physical-Celebration'* panel.



Forrest Kirkland's 1935 Drawing

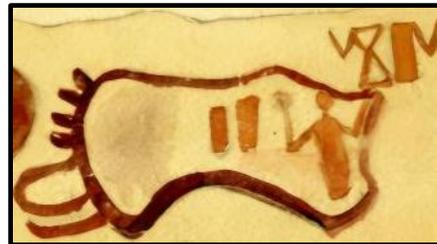
2. The panel just above appears to tell a completely different story, but also a female one. This story needs the Forrest Kirkland drawing for clarity to understand the intended meaning.





Forrest Kirkland's 1935 Drawing

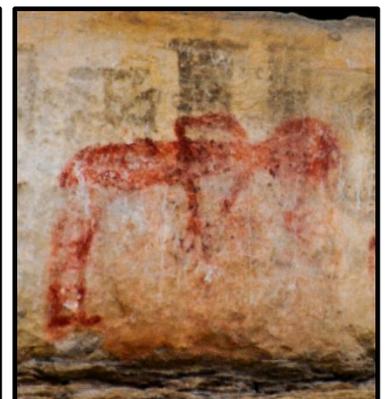
This panel appears to tell the story of the blessings of pregnancy and the upcoming birth. In the upper-right section, there are two groups depicting pairs of people. The left image shows a side-by-side view of a woman and a man. There are no heads or feet. The woman has only one right arm, and the man has only one left arm, representing half a woman and half a man. What they create is a baby. Below them is an image of a person (baby) in a womb.



The two marks probably represent the essences of the woman and man that create the baby. There are two lines to the right of the man/woman image. Our interpretation is that this represents the division between our world and the spirit world. The two entities to the right represent those in the spirit world from which the baby has come. They appear to be floating rather than standing.



To the left of the womb image is an image of a woman bending over and suffering from morning sickness, indicating the pregnancy. We know this is a human image by comparing it with another similar image in the bluff, not far away, which is in a similar position and clearly shows it is a person, again in a position of sickness.

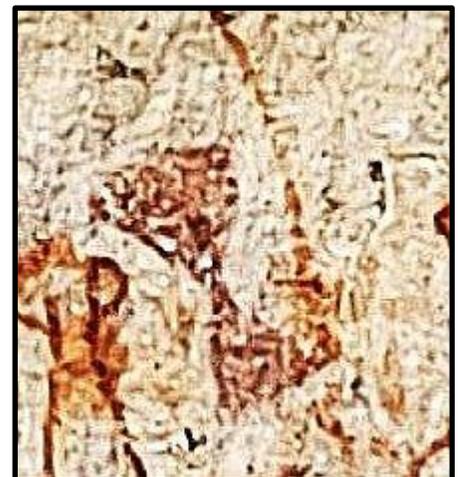


Separate image of a bent-over woman at Paint Rock

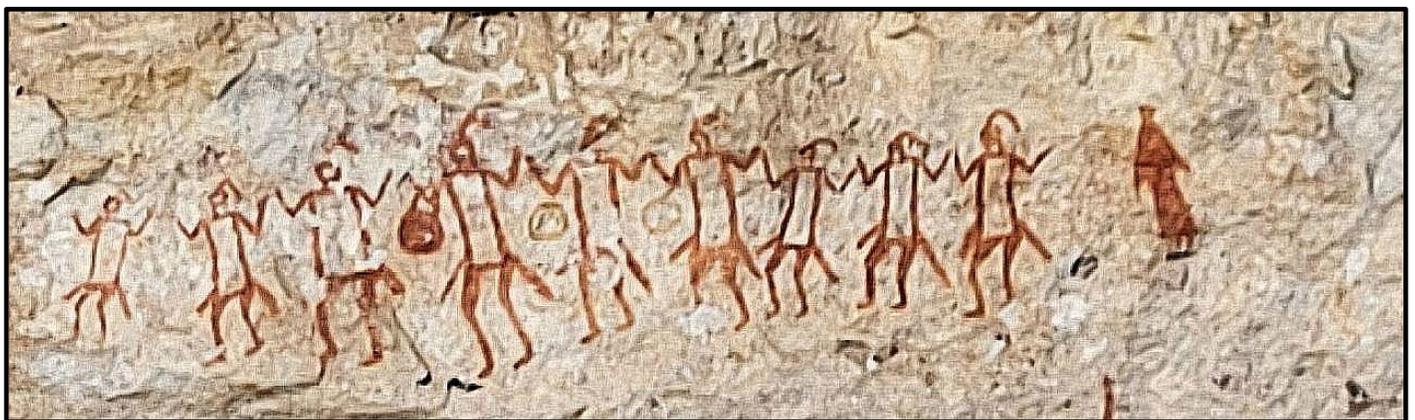
To the left in the image are two women, one man, and possibly a child with a drum, celebrating the pregnancy. The hourglass-like shape of the female compares closely to the Lady In Blue depiction at Meyers Spring. In fact, this shape helps to validate the analysis of the Lady In Blue at that site. In that case, the Jumano were attempting to depict a spirit-like female entity, shown here guiding the expedition to the grand gathering of the Jumano Nation in northern Texas.



The depiction of dancing with a drum is also very similar to the dancing depicted at Meyers Spring. These similarities help tie these two sites together and support the postulation that they are both Jumano pictograph and ceremonial sites.



Meyers Spring Lady In Blue Pictograph



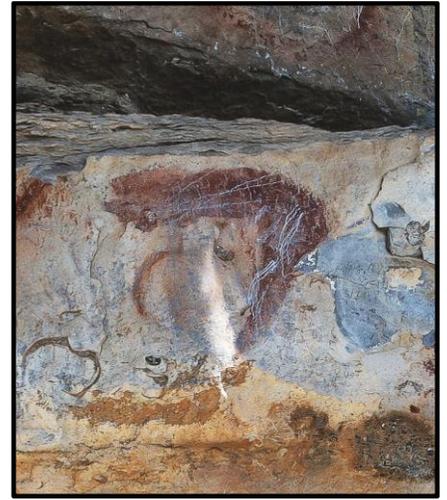


New Mexico Puebloan women in ceremonial dress and dance

However, there is more to this pictograph panel. The event was apparently so special that they created the panel intentionally to be highlighted by a solar light marker that appears on the Spring Equinox.

Spring Equinox: Indigenous beliefs regarding the equinox, particularly in North America, focus on the balance between day and night, marking a pivotal time for spiritual renewal, community gathering, and environmental observation. Spring signifies new life and "new fire" ceremonies, while autumn focuses on gratitude, harvest, and preparing for winter's darkness. The equinox represents a perfect balance between light and dark, prompting reflection on finding balance within oneself and with nature. Considered by many as the start of the new year, the spring equinox celebrates the return of life, warmth, and plant/animal activity. Some cultures perform "new fire" rituals, symbolizing the rekindling of energy and life force.

During the Spring Equinox, on March 21st, 2026, we visited the site to observe a reported solar marker on the panel. At 1:40 P.M., a narrow light dagger/pointer began to appear at the foot of the bent-over female. In just five minutes, the light expanded upward to intersect exactly at the woman's belly. The fact that this light dagger did not slowly slide across the rock, but appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, and quickly expanded to the woman's belly is beyond coincidence. This was an intentional interaction with the story panel. At the same time, a separate shaft of light is pointing directly to the spirit world figures. Based on this interpretation, we are calling this the **‘Pregnancy-Panel-of-Life-Celebration’** panel.



Light dagger/pointer appears at the feet and begins to expand upward

Pregnancy-Panel-of-Life-Celebration Panel Solar Sequence:



1: 40 p.m.

Light shaft begins at feet, shaft #2 points at spirit beings



1:41 p.m.

Light shaft grows, shaft #2 points at spirit beings



1:43 p.m.

Light shaft reaches body, shaft #2 points at spirit beings



1:44 p.m.

Light shaft crosses belly, shaft #2 points at spirit beings



1:45 p.m.

Light shaft fully encompasses belly, shaft #2 points at spirit beings



1:47 p.m.

Light shaft begins to move to right, shaft #2 moves to right



2:55 p.m.

First light shaft has expanded and moved right. It now encompasses baby in womb and father/mother, but has blocked out the spirit world. Light shaft #3, to left, now encompasses celebratory women.

The Solar Marker Circles

There is a solar marker panel above the two female pictograph panels. This is a well-known marker, studied since its discovery around 2009. It creates a sunlight-frame animation that moves across the panel on both solstice and equinox days. Once again, the clarity of Forrest Kirkland's 1935 drawing helps to understand the possible intention and meaning behind this creation.



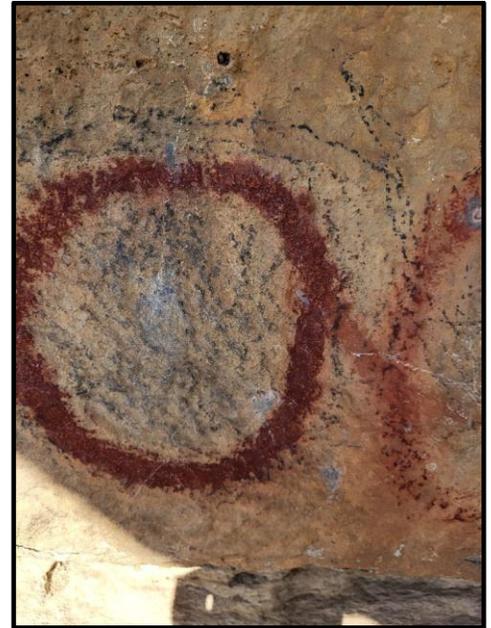


Solar marker circles and bull & bull fighter is top panel of the three



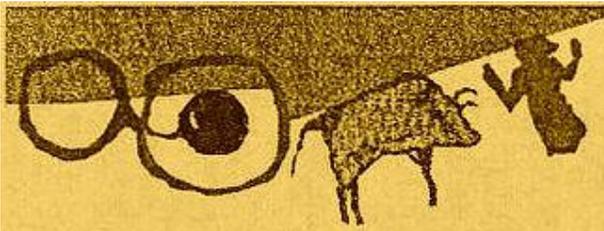
Forrest Kirkland's 1935 Drawing

We discovered a critical item about this pictograph that was not known until our recent visit. Although the paint is faded, you can see that the circle on the left originally had a small white circle at its center, surrounded by black paint. The circle on the right has a black circle that was surrounded by white paint. That makes these two circles opposites.

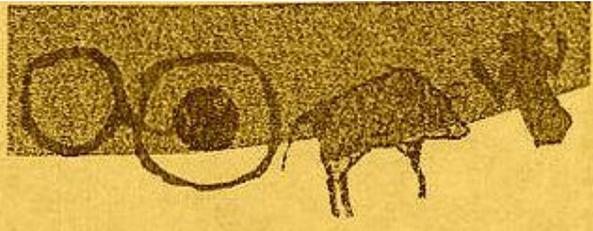


The small white circle with a black border is visible in both images. The left image was taken during the Winter Solstice, and the right photo was taken during the equinox.

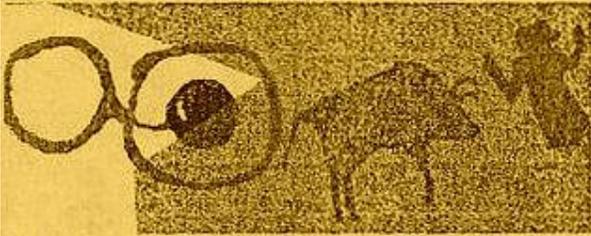
The design likely symbolizes the duality and balance between light and darkness, reflecting broader Indigenous cosmological themes of harmony, cycles, and renewal. The left circle—with its white center surrounded by black—may represent the dominance of darkness encroaching on light, akin to the shortening days leading into winter. The right circle, inversely colored with a black center surrounded by white, probably signifies the return of light overtaking darkness, and marking the lengthening days after the turning point. The following minute-by-minute panels, created by Bill Yeates, give a very good depiction of the moving solar markings.



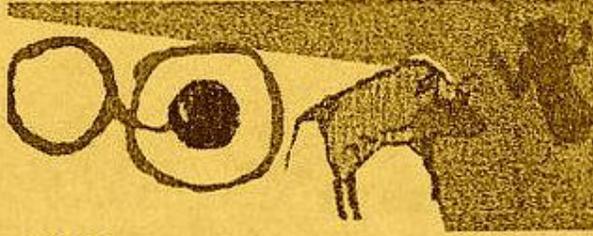
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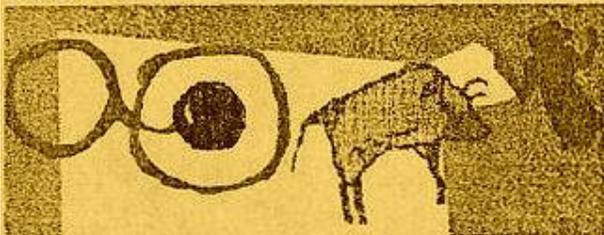
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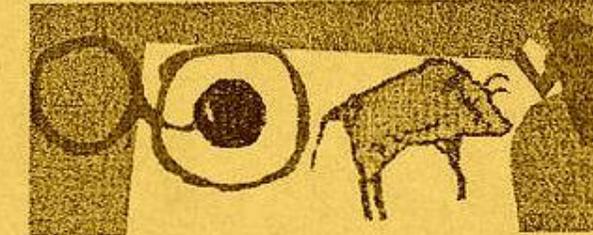
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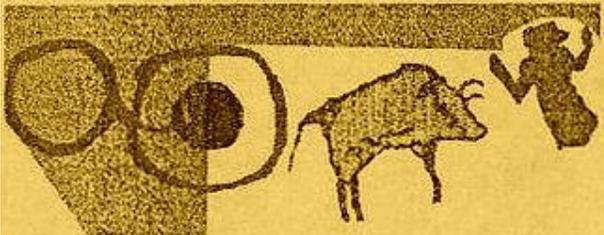
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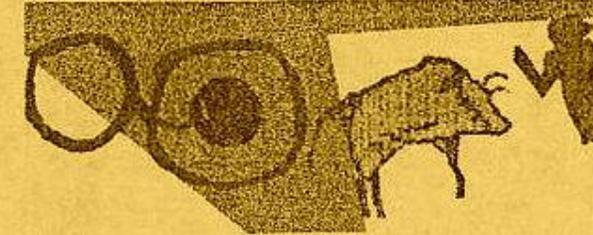
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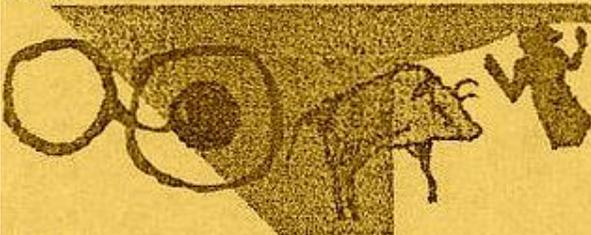
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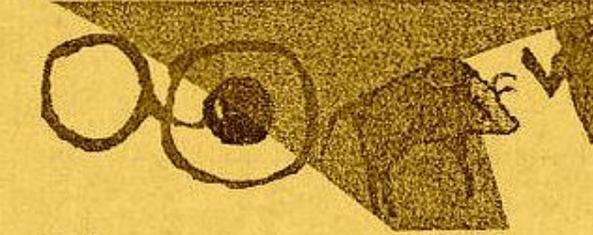
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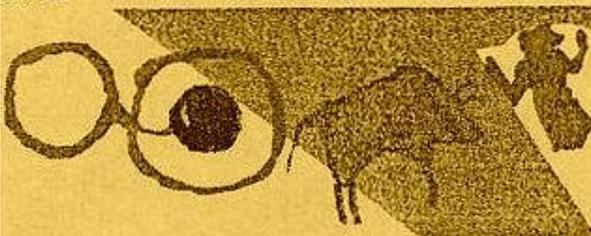
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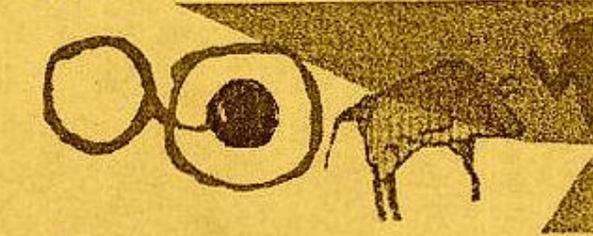
2:05



2:10



2:25



2:40

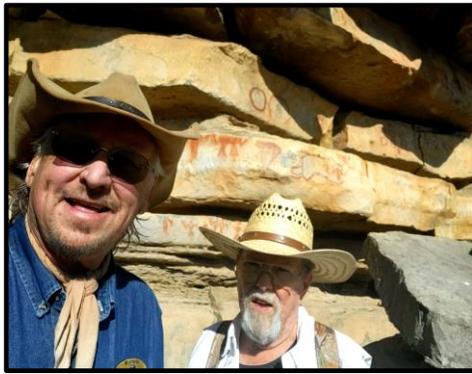
(images by Bill Yeates)

The bull is now thoroughly washed out, but was visible when Kirkland drew it. We interpret it as a bull rather than a buffalo because of its long tail. A buffalo has a tail half the length as the drawing, which the Indian buffalo hunters would have known. Thus, we are analyzing this to be a bullfight depiction. Bullfighting began in New Spain as early as 1529, spreading from Mexico City northward as territories were acquired in the northern region. Bullfighting spread into northern New Spain, with the establishment of mining settlements in the mid-to-late 1500s. The earliest reliable written documentation in the northern provinces dates from the late 1500s to the early 1600s. Bullfights were held in the Jumano area of northeastern Mexico during town festivals in the early 1600s. Documentation is sparse, but the one actual reference for Saltillo, Mexico, comes from a 1712 edict on bullfighting held in the town square. Saltillo is number 10 on the map of early Jumano settlements on page 3 of this report. The experience of viewing a bullfight likely came from an event in that region.

Similar to the animation of sunlight framing the circles, it also moves from the bull to the bullfighter, creating a parallel in the story: the transition from winter's darkness, symbolized by the bull, to the earth's return to man, symbolized by the bullfighter.

Conclusion

The road to the main Jumano village on the Concho River to the east ran right past the Paint Rock bluffs. It is reasonable to assume that most of the pictographs were created by these people. However, this is the first evidence of another Jumano location, based on and its pictographs that could be compared and analyzed to show that they use the same drawing techniques. These human-form images are unique among human figures at Texas pictograph sites, providing us the evidence that the same group of people created them. Jumano of the plains and the Concho River were hunters and traders, traveling far and wide. They were also a spiritual people, both before and after the Lady In Blue's Christianization. (Ashmore) This is reflected in their ceremonial and celebratory drawings. These revelations should help to find similar human-figure drawings at additional sites.



Tom Ashmore and C.A. Maedgen



To see a complete drone video tour of the Paint Rock wall, see our video on the website at this link:

<https://westtexasarcheologicalsociety.website/pictograph-interpretation-reports-and-videos>

Acknowledgements

We want to thank Paint Rock landowner, **Bill Campbell**, for his assistance and collaboration on this project. To book tours at Pain Rock, follow the link below.

<https://thepaintedrocks.org/>

Bill Martinez Acosta, a WTAS member and Jumano spiritual and cultural leader, also collaborated in the pictograph interpretations addressed in this report. We would also like to commemorate and honor **Bill Yeates** for his extensive archeoastronomy work on this site in 2002.



1938- 2022

Resources

Ashmore, Tom

2025 *The Jumano Picture Story of 'The Lady in Blue' at Meyers Spring, Texas*

<https://assets.zyrosite.com/AzGE74rQ66UMXrKb/the-jumano-picture-story-in-pictographs-at-meyers-spring-QoHyIMBSq1HMA50N.pdf>

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