

~~THE CAPROCK SITE: A HISTORIC INDIAN BURIAL~~
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ms. The Caprock Site: A Historic Indian Burial in Garza
County, Texas. Unpublished Ms.

OBJECTS RECOVERED

Specimens from the Caprock Site can generally be sorted into two major categories: personal paraphernalia and horse trappings.

One finger ring was recovered from the site. It is a strip of genuine silver measuring 17mm in length, 6mm at the widest part and tapers to 3mm at each end. Notches are cut along the edges about 1mm apart.

Six brass buttons were excavated. The face is made of brass and the back and shanks are made of iron. These six buttons are rusted in such a way as to indicate they had been tied together and carried as possible extra ornaments. They measure 8mm in diameter. There are no identifying marks on them as to possible manufacturer's name.

Eleven silver bangles are represented and nine are complete. Five have leather in the center and five also have engraved lines. Three with horizontal lines and two with vertical lines. Apparently these were cut from pre-decorated sheet metal then rolled into cone shape bangles. Lengths range from 11mm to 13mm.

Twenty silver cylinders were found. Fifteen are complete with ten having edges that are flush and five edges that overlap. Length range from 5mm to 24mm and range from 3mm to 4mm in diameter.

Indications are that an attempt was made to copy the genuine silver ornaments with German silver. There are crudely made ornaments which resemble those made of genuine silver. Red calico was found attached to some of the German silver ornaments which might indicate they were tied onto the leather straps of a bridle or the calico might have been ornamental dangles.

German silver was acquired about 1865 and was still in use by the Southern Plains Indians when they were placed on their reservations in 1875.

In view of the richness of the offerings in the burial, we conclude that this was likely a well-to-do or highly thought of person who was buried about 1870.

From the type of artifacts found, the location chosen for burial, and the probable time of burial, we conclude this was most likely a Comanche.

There are two beads made from unidentified shell. One measures 50mm in length and tapers from 5mm to 7mm in diameter. A portion of one other bead measuring 14mm in length and 7mm in diameter was recovered.

Twenty-two metal conchas were found. Seven are made from genuine silver and fifteen are made from German silver. Six are believed to have been on horse trappings and sixteen used as personal adornment.

The genuine silver conchas range from 24mm to 68mm in diameter. One is hand engraved and has two "D" shaped cut-outs in the center. Three are ornamented with cuts around the edges about 1mm in length, and 1mm apart. Three are solid with convex faces and ~~had~~ a shank soldered on the back.

The German silver conchas range from 30mm to 95mm in diameter. Eight have D shape cut-outs for attachment, two had shanks soldered to the back, one has a single hole in the center, two have perforations on opposing edges, and two have rectangular shape cut-outs.

There are 74 brass bracelets, all more or less oval shape and made from four sizes of brass wire, 70 are complete. 44 still remain on the left forearm with the flesh preserved under the bracelets. The bracelets range from 35mm to 64mm in diameter. 67 have been hammered flat on the sides and seven are made from round wire. The 28th bracelet from the distal end of the left forearm has been decorated with notches cut or filed across the exterior face. The notches are 1mm to 3mm apart.

Apparently the bracelets were bent around the arm and worn continually.

Two mirrors were recovered from the site. One is oval shape and measures 51mm by 86mm and is 15mm thick. Indications are that it had a wood frame and possibly leather around it at one time.

The other mirror is rectangular shaped with the glass measuring 18cm by 24cm and is 4mm thick. The frame is made of wood and measures 24cm by 38cm and is 2cm thick. The frame is decorated with three sizes of brass tacks. The front face has 74 tacks still in place along with 10 tack points and 86 holes where tacks had been at one time. A large portion of the back has deteriorated but indications are that it was once solid. *There are 14 tacks and 14 holes which were attached to the back.* The glass was held in place by thirteen *Indication that it was* thorns, seven on one side and six on the other. Seven of the thorns still remain broken off even with the edge of the frame. The remaining portion of the thorns range from 6mm to 18mm in length.

One ~~Two~~ belts ~~were~~ recovered. ~~One~~ ^{It} is made of commercially tanned leather which is covered on the front and part of the back with two sizes of German silver bands. The large bands have three notches cut on each end. The ornament on the tip of this belt is made of genuine silver. Total length of the belt is 70cm and width is 25cm.

The other belt is commercially tanned leather to which possibly eight German silver conchas were attached. Two ^{of the} conchas are fastened to a leather strap with buckskin thongs.

An iron awl measuring 79mm in length was found.

An awl case made of commercially tanned leather and measuring about 130mm in length was excavated. Part of two rows of small white seed beads still remain along the seam. Indications are there ~~there~~ were beads all along the seam at one time. Bead impressions on the opposite side indicate there was a double row of beads sewn on as added ~~decoration~~ decoration. It has fringe on the top and lower end which is decorated with four silver bands clamped around it and one small "S" shaped chain link on the end of each strand of fringe.

Evidence of two bridles and one Indian made saddle were recovered. This includes two girth buckles, measuring 86mm in diameter, Two saddle rings measuring 65mm in diameter, two saddle stirrups made from iron which do not match, part of a saddle horn made of soft wood and decorated with brass tacks. We also found one Spanish ring bit, and one hand forged, medium port, curb bit, four rivets containing fragments of leather, four small buckles, three are made of iron and one is made from brass, and a large amount of chain with "S" shaped links. Bridle ornaments made from genuine and German silver were found.

In the genuine silver ^{ornaments} there are five matched pairs and two which do not match. These ornaments are engraved with a "rocker stamp" decoration. One of these ornaments has part of a chain rusted in the loop on one end. It is probable that these ornaments were on the bridle with the Spanish ring bit.

More than 30,000 glass trade beads ranging in size from 1mm to 3mm in length and 2mm to 4mm in ^{diameter} ~~width~~ were recovered. There are eight different colors and five different sizes. There are five sizes of opaque white, four sizes ~~size~~ of blue, three sizes of red, two sizes of turquoise color, two sizes of translucent green, one size of translucent aquamarine, and size of amber, and one single black bead. More than half of the beads are of the glass translucent variety.

Dressed animal skins are represented by fragments of a heavy hide which possibly represents a buffalo robe. There is also a fragment of probable dressed deer skin. Part of the headwork still remains on this fragment and indications are that the lazy stitch was used.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

The Caprock Site is belived to be one of the richest nineteenth century burials reported in the Southwest Region. All of the artifacts recovered from the Site are identifiable as possible personal possessions.

The skeletal remains represent a female about 23 to 25 years of age at the time of death. The cause of death has not been determined. Indications are that the person could have been in good health at the time of death, having recovered from severe injury to part of the lower ribs on the left side and to the inner face of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Lumbar vertebrae.

The teeth are in almost perfect condition, showing very little wear and no stain.

The presence of the kind of artifacts found in the Caprock Site point to a late stage historic Indian burial. These artifacts include genuine and German silver ornaments, brass bracelets, glass trade beads, mirrors, and iron horse trappings. An excellent state of preservation of flesh, bone, leather, cloth, and wood which lay in conjunction with brass or other metal objects, becoming impregnated with copper salts, is much in evidence.

An approximate time for burial can be narrowed somewhat by the minimum date for the appearance as trade goods of some of the items recovered. One of the more accurate dating objects are the glass translucent beads. Of the some 30,000 beads found at the Caprock Site, over half are of the translucent variety which became popular with the Southern Plains Indians about 1870.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS

From what we know about the kind of artifacts found here we can conclude that this is a late Historic Stage burial. This period covering the years of about 1860 to 1880, A.D.

The approximate time of burial can be narrowed somewhat by the minimum date for the appearance, as trade goods, of some of the items recovered. One of the more accurate dating objects is glass trade beads. Changes in methods of manufacture and styles occurred about every 20 years during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Of the some 30,000 beads found at the Caprock Site, all are small seed beads, and are characteristic of the late 19th century trade beads in the southern Plains area. These seed beads were undoubtedly sewn on clothing, and containers, such as bags and the awl case, to form designs for ornamentation. Well over half of these beads were of the translucent colors which became ~~pp~~ popular about 1870.

Many years before this date, genuine silver ornaments like those from the burial were being made for Comanche and Kiowa Indians by Mexican silver smiths near ~~###~~ present ~~pl~~ Silver City, New Mexico.

German silver, in sheets, was first acquired from Charles Whitacre, a trader, when he visited their camps in the summer of 1866, and was still in use at the time Indians of the southern Plains were placed on their reservation in 1875. in this area

Since the Indians were mostly on the run during the mid 1870's as they were being pressed by white immigrants, and pursued by the U.S. Cavalry, it is doubtful that an Indian woman carrying this much ornamentation would have been this area very much after the year of 1870. The minimum date for the appearance of translucent seed beads would also be near 1870.

The pathology report on bones of the skeleton indicate a female of about 23 to 25 years of age at the time of death. No definite cause of death can be determined. Indications are that the person could have been in good health, and had recovered from severe injury to ribs, and to the back bones. From evidence at hand it is likely that the woman was a well-to-do Comanche Indian.