

Journal #4227 from sdc 8.22.18

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Archaeologists explore a rural field in Kansas, and a lost city emerges
By David Kelly

Of all the places to discover a lost city, this pleasing little community seems an unlikely candidate.

There are no vine-covered temples or impenetrable jungles here — just an old-fashioned downtown, a drug store that serves up root beer floats and rambling houses along shady brick lanes.

Yet there’s always been something — something just below the surface.

Locals have long scoured fields and river banks for arrowheads and bits of pottery, amassing huge collections. Then there were those murky tales of a sprawling city on the Great Plains and a chief who drank from a goblet of gold.



Russell Bishop still has the arrowheads he collected as a kid in Arkansas City. David Kelly / For The Times

A few years ago, Donald Blakeslee, an anthropologist and archaeology professor at Wichita State University, began piecing things together. And what he's found has spurred a rethinking of traditional views on the early settlement of the Midwest, while potentially filling a major gap in American history.

Using freshly translated documents written by the Spanish conquistadors more than 400 years ago and an array of high-tech equipment, Blakeslee located what he believes to be the lost city of Etzana, home to perhaps 20,000 people between 1450 and 1700.

They lived in thatched, beehive-shaped houses that ran for at least five miles along the bluffs and banks of the Walnut and Arkansas rivers. Blakeslee says the site is the second-largest ancient settlement in the country after Cahokia in Illinois.

On a recent morning, Blakeslee supervised a group of Wichita State students excavating a series of rectangular pits in a local field.

Jeremiah Perkins, 21, brushed dirt from a half-buried black pot.

Others sifted soil over screened boxes, revealing arrowheads, pottery and stone scrapers used to thin buffalo hides.

Blakeslee, 75, became intrigued by Etzana after scholars at UC Berkeley retranslated in 2013 the often muddled Spanish accounts of their forays into what is now Kansas. The new versions were more cogent, precise and vivid.

"I thought, 'Wow, their eyewitness descriptions are so clear it's like you were there.' I wanted to see if the archaeology fit their descriptions," he said. "Every single detail matched this place."



Kacie Larsen of Wichita State University shakes dirt through a screened box to see what artifacts may emerge. (David Kelly / For The Times)

Conquistadors are often associated with Mexico, but a thirst for gold drove them into the Midwest as

well.

Francisco Vazquez de Coronado came to central Kansas in 1541 chasing stories of a fabulously wealthy nobleman who napped beneath trees festooned with tinkling gold bells. He found no gold, but he did find Native Americans in a collection of settlements he dubbed Quivira.

In 1601, Juan de Oñate led about 70 conquistadors from the Spanish colony of New Mexico into south-central Kansas in search of Quivira in the hopes of finding gold, winning converts for the Catholic Church and extracting tribute for the crown.

According to Spanish records, they ran into a tribe called the Escanjaques, who told of a large city nearby where a Spaniard was allegedly imprisoned. The locals called it Etzanoa.

As the Spaniards drew near, they spied numerous grass houses along the bluffs. A delegation of Etzanoans bearing round corn cakes met them on the river bank. They were described as a sturdy people with gentle dispositions and stripes tattooed from their eyes to their ears. It was a friendly encounter until the conquistadors decided to take hostages. That prompted the entire city to flee.

Oñate's men wandered the empty settlement for two or three days, counting 2,000 houses that held eight to 10 people each. Gardens of pumpkins, corn and sunflowers lay between the homes.

The Spaniards could see more houses in the distance, but they feared an Etzanoan attack and turned back.

That's when they were ambushed by 1,500 Escanjaques. The conquistadors battled them with guns and cannons before finally withdrawing back to New Mexico, never to return.

This bluff overlooks the spot where many believe Spanish conquistador Juan de Oñate met a delegation of Etzanoans. (David Kelly / For The Times)

French explorers arrived a century later but found nothing. Disease likely wiped out Etzanoa, leaving it to recede into legend.

Blakeslee enlisted the help of the National Park Service, which used a magnetometer to detect variations in the earth's magnetic field and find features around town that looked like homes, storage pits and places where fires were started.

Then, relying on descriptions from the conquistadors, he discovered what he believes was the battle site in an upscale neighborhood of Arkansas City.

Volunteers using metal detectors found three half-inch iron balls under the field. Blakeslee said they were 17th century Spanish cartridge shot fired from a cannon. A Spanish horseshoe nail was also found.

It all lent credibility to the detailed accounts left by the conquistadors.

The battlefield sits in Warren “Hap” McLeod’s backyard.

“It’s a great story,” he said. “There was a lost city right under our noses.”

McLeod, 71, offered a quick tour of the area.

He started at Camp Quaker Haven overlooking the spot where Oñate would have encountered the Etzanoans. McLeod then drove up to the country club, the highest point in the city of roughly 12,500 people.

“Lots of artifacts have been taken from here,” McLeod said.



In 1994, thousands of relics were unearthed during road construction. In 1959, the renowned archaeologist Waldo Wedel wrote in his classic book, “An Introduction to Kansas Archeology,” that the valley floor and bluffs here “were littered with sherds, flints, and other detritus” that went on for miles.

“Now we know why,” McLeod said. “There were 20,000 people living here for over 200 years.”

Local rancher Jason Smith, 47, said he had seen collections “that would blow your mind.”

“Truckloads of stuff,” he said. “Worked stone tools, flints. One guy had 100 boxes at his house.”

Russell Bishop, 66, worked at the country club as a kid.

“My boss had an entire basement full of pottery and all kinds of artifacts,” he recalled. “We’d be out there working and he would recognize a black spot on the ground as an ancient campfire site.”

Bishop, who now lives outside Denver, has coffee cans full of arrowheads. He spread some on his counter.

“I don’t think anyone knew how big this all was,” he said. “I’m glad they’re finally getting to the bottom of it.”

Kansas State Archaeologist Robert Hoard said that based on the Spanish accounts and the evidence of a large settlement, it's "plausible" that Blakeslee has found Etzanoa.

Still, he would like more evidence.

The early Great Plains had long been imagined as a vast empty space populated by nomadic tribes following buffalo herds. But if Blakeslee is right, at least some of the tribes were urban. They built large towns, raised crops, made fine pottery, processed bison on a massive scale and led a settled existence. There were trade connections all the way to the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan in Mexico.

"So this was not some remote place. The people traded and lived in huge communities," Blakeslee said. "Everything we thought we knew turns out to be wrong. I think this needs a place in every schoolbook."

And that may just be the beginning. Blakeslee has found archaeological evidence in Rice and McPherson counties for other large settlements extending for miles, which he believes existed around the same time as Etzanoa.

He has published his findings in the peer-reviewed journal *Plains Anthropologist*, and next spring he will present his evidence for Etzanoa at the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology. A bigger excavation is planned for next summer.

The Wichita Nation, based three hours south in Anadarko, Okla., is watching all of this carefully. Experts believe the Etzanoans were their ancestors.

"The accounts of Oñate and Coronado have been interpreted for years," said Gary McAdams, cultural program planner and historic preservation officer for the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, which number about 3,300. "We had a suspicion it was settled like this, but now it's starting to be documented, which makes it feel more real."

In the meantime, Arkansas City is trying to determine how to promote its new claim to fame. Etzanoa remains mostly underground or on private land. Yet that hasn't deterred interest.

"We get about 10 calls a day to see the lost city," said Pamela Crain, director of the Convention & Visitors Bureau. "The vision is to have a visitors center. The other key is to persuade landowners to allow people onto their property."

Limited tours began last spring, focusing on key historical and archaeological sites. Town leaders are hoping for a UNESCO World Heritage site designation.

Back at the dig site, all eyes were on Jeremiah Perkins as he lifted the hefty black potsherd from the dirt.

Blakeslee dropped into the pit for a closer look. It was the largest artifact of the summer, perhaps 12 inches high.

"That's a nice big cooking pot," he exclaimed.

Yet many mysteries remain about the people of Etzanao.

“How were they organized? How did they farm the bluffs? How did they maximize bison herds?” Blakeslee asked. “The questions go on and on and on.”

And the thought of that made him smile.

Kelly is a special correspondent.

How teen activists are using fashion, tech to register thousands of voters *Axios*

Jammal Lemy wears the QR vote registration t-shirt he designed. In China, QR codes are everywhere, used to pay for seemingly every single thing all day long, adding up to an estimated \$1.65 trillion in transactions in 2016 alone. Not so much in the U.S., where, apart from some experimental use by Snap and Facebook, people barely notice the QR codes around them — except, now, in youth voter registration. What's going on: In their most recent popularization in the U.S., QRs are front and center in [Read the full story](#)

How This Native American Fashion Designer Uses Art and Activism To Inspire Her Work *We Rise by PopSugar*



Tribute to John Trudell

Little Daughter
You are so small for a big woman
So soft for someone
Who must be so strong

Little Daughter
I wold you in my arms
I laugh and am happy at your
Baby girl smile
To say I feel good is not enough

Little Daughter
I walk with you
Through the dimension called time
For what are minutes days or years
Compared to Father Daughter
Places in eternity

Little Daughter
You the delicate infant child
Carry the innocent reality
I pray for your protection
Prayers to help you through
This life experience

Little Daughter
The times I hold you next to me
I am flowing an infinity of love
To fill the times
I cannot hold you next to me

Little Daughter
I am always with you
Even when you cannot see me there

Sister, Sister
I want to talk to the woman in you
We're under siege in a troubled time

Sister, Sister
Won't you hear my voice
I'm your Brother
But I've made the mistakes of a man
Sometimes It's lonely being a man
The programming has its affect
Isolation is such a cruel thing

Sister, Sister
Won't you understand
They took your Brothers
Turned them into men
Like they took our sisters
Turned them into women

Sister, Sister
We are all the family of earth
They have taken us away
In their new clear war
Taught us to compete and abuse
And blame each other
While we're all being used

Sister, Sister
Hear my heart
It's time to bring the family back
Together we must remember earth
We must remember what life is all about

Sister, Sister
I am your Brother
Every time I've ever hurt you
I've always hurt myself

Sister, Sister
Hear my voice
It's all up to us
We have a choice

Crystal clear tears of salt
Come when my heart talks with sadness
The tears flow my emotional rivers
It's no damn use to pretend
Pain will not rise again

Crystal clear tears of salt
Help my heart to feel for something
When I do not want to
Clear my vision see my peace
Men don't cry Indians are stoic
I tell that to my heart to my eyes
They just laugh at me and sometimes
When my spirit hurts they make me cry

Crystal clear tears of salt
Purify my memory help me understand
This is not the beginning nor the end

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[John Trudell Archives - Home | Facebook](#)



<https://www.facebook.com/johntrudellarchives/>

*John Trudell Archives*. This is the Official Facebook Page for John Trudell and his Archives.

**[John Trudell : Federal Bureau of Investigation : Free ... - Internet Archive](https://archive.org/details/JohnTrudell)** <https://archive.org/details/JohnTrudell>

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**[John Trudell at CSU Hayward / John Trudell. | Pacifica Radio Archives](https://pacificaradioarchives.org/recording/az1009)**

<https://pacificaradioarchives.org/recording/az1009>

American Indian Movement activist, poet, and musician *John Trudell* presents a personal history as well as a history of his people. He discusses how the war between AIM and the FBI has resulted in the loss of his family. He then uses DNA as a metaphor to show that we are the ancestors and the descendants.

**[Biography | John Trudell](https://www.johntrudell.com/biography/)** <https://www.johntrudell.com/biography/>

John Trudell was born on February 15, 1946 in Omaha, Nebraska, and grew up on and around the nearby Santee Sioux reservation. (His father was a Santee, his mother's tribal roots were in Mexico.) Trudell became acquainted with hardship at an early age. His mother died when he was 6, and he watched his father ...

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**Exclusive: Some Arctic ground no longer freezing—even in winter**

**National Geographic**

New data from two Arctic sites suggest some surface layers are no longer freezing. If that continues, greenhouse gases from permafrost could accelerate climate change. Read the full story

**Arctic's strongest sea ice breaks up for first time on record** [Jonathan Watts](#)

**Usually frozen waters open up twice this year in phenomenon scientists described as scary**

*Scientists say thinning of the sea ice has reached even the coldest parts of the Arctic.*

*Photograph: Nick Cobbing/Greenpeace*

The oldest and thickest sea ice in the Arctic has started to break up, opening waters north of [Greenland](#) that are normally frozen, even in summer.

This phenomenon – which has never been recorded before – has occurred twice this year due to warm winds and a [climate-change driven](#) heatwave in the northern hemisphere.

One meteorologist described the loss of ice as “scary”. Others said it could force scientists to revise their theories about which part of the [Arctic](#) will withstand warming the longest.

The sea off the north coast of Greenland is normally so frozen that it was referred to, until recently, as “the last ice area” because it was assumed that this would be the final northern holdout against the melting effects of a hotter planet.

But abnormal temperature spikes in February and earlier this month have left it vulnerable to winds, which have pushed the ice further away from the coast than at any time since satellite records began in the 1970s.

“Almost all of the ice to the north of Greenland is quite shattered and broken up and therefore more mobile,” said Ruth Mottram of the Danish Meteorological Institute. “Open water off the north coast of Greenland is unusual. This area has often been called ‘the last ice area’ as it has been suggested that the last perennial sea ice in the Arctic will occur here. The events of the last week suggest that, actually, the last ice area may be further west.”

Ice to the north of Greenland is usually particularly compacted due to the Transpolar Drift Stream, one of two major weather patterns that push ice from Siberia across the Arctic to the coastline, where it packs.



Walt Meier, a senior research scientist at the US National

Snow and Ice Data Center, said: “The ice there has nowhere else to go so it piles up. On average, it’s over four metres thick and can be piled up into ridges 20 metres thick or more. This thick, compacted ice is generally not easily moved around.

“However, that was not the case this past winter (in February and March) and now. The ice is being pushed away from the coast by the winds.”

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