



## Rock Creek Station Survey

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Beginning of archeological survey near park entrance.

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Recently, Nebraska State Historical Society archeologists worked with the Nebraska Game and Parks (NGPC) to conduct a pedestrian survey at Rock Creek Station, a stage and Pony Express station established in 1857 near present day Fairbury, Nebraska. In 1980, the NGPC developed the site into a state historical park, encompassing the locations of the road ranches that sold supplies and other services to emigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as a segment of Oregon and California Trail ruts. Archeological excavations conducted at the time the park was established provided information that allowed for accurate reconstruction of many of the stations' structures. These reconstructed buildings along with artifacts discovered during the 1980-1981 excavations remain on display at the park.

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Survey crew member Jason Tonsfeldt (NGPC) examining a reconstructed East Ranch building.

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Upcoming plans for a prescribed burn prompted the current archeological survey of the park's 350 acres. The burn, part of an oak woodland restoration project and intended to help control the spread of invasive plants, is not expected to affect known archeological sites at the park. However, the proposed burn provided a good opportunity to conduct an inventory of archeological resources at the park, both through a pre-burn survey with the existing vegetation, as well as a survey following the prescribed fires. This post-burn survey, planned for late-April, is expected to take advantage of the greater visibility afforded by the fires via the removal of vegetation, possibly revealing additional unrecorded archeological features and sites.

Data gathered during these inventory surveys will help NGPC staff plan future activities within the park in a way that ensures important archeological sites are not damaged by continued development. The data from these surveys also contributes to a more robust interpretation of Nebraska history within the park boundaries, as well as a greater understanding of past occupations in the state as a whole. To date, the survey has led to the discovery of several previously unknown sites, both prehistoric and historic, as well as the recordation of graves located on the property. To get a closer look at the pre-burn archeological survey, be sure to scroll through the photos below!

For more information on visiting Rock Creek Station, or to learn more about its history and past archeological investigations at the park, visit <http://outdoornebraska.gov/rockcreekstation/> or check out the following:

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Carlson, Gayle F.

1980 A Preliminary Report on the Results of the 1980 Archeological Investigations at Rock Creek Station State Historical Park, Nebraska. Nebraska State Historical Society.

1982 The 1981 Archeological Investigations at Rock Creek Station State Historical Park, Nebraska: A Preliminary Report on the Results of the Second Season of Excavations. Nebraska State Historical Society.



NSHS Archeologist Rob Bozell and Game and Parks staff Jim Domeier and Bob Hanover discuss finds along the creek, including bison remains and clay drain tile fragments.



Rock Creek Station Superintendent Jeff Bargar (center) points out various park features while surveying near the trail ruts.



Bargar, Domeier, and Bozell survey near the reconstructed West Ranch.



Survey crew members mark down possible cultural features, including depressions and a possible washed-out dugout after emerging from the timber near the East Ranch (pictured left to right: Bob Hanover, Jim Domeier, Rick Bell, Rob Bozell, and Jeff Bargar).



Crew surveys near the southeastern edge of the park.





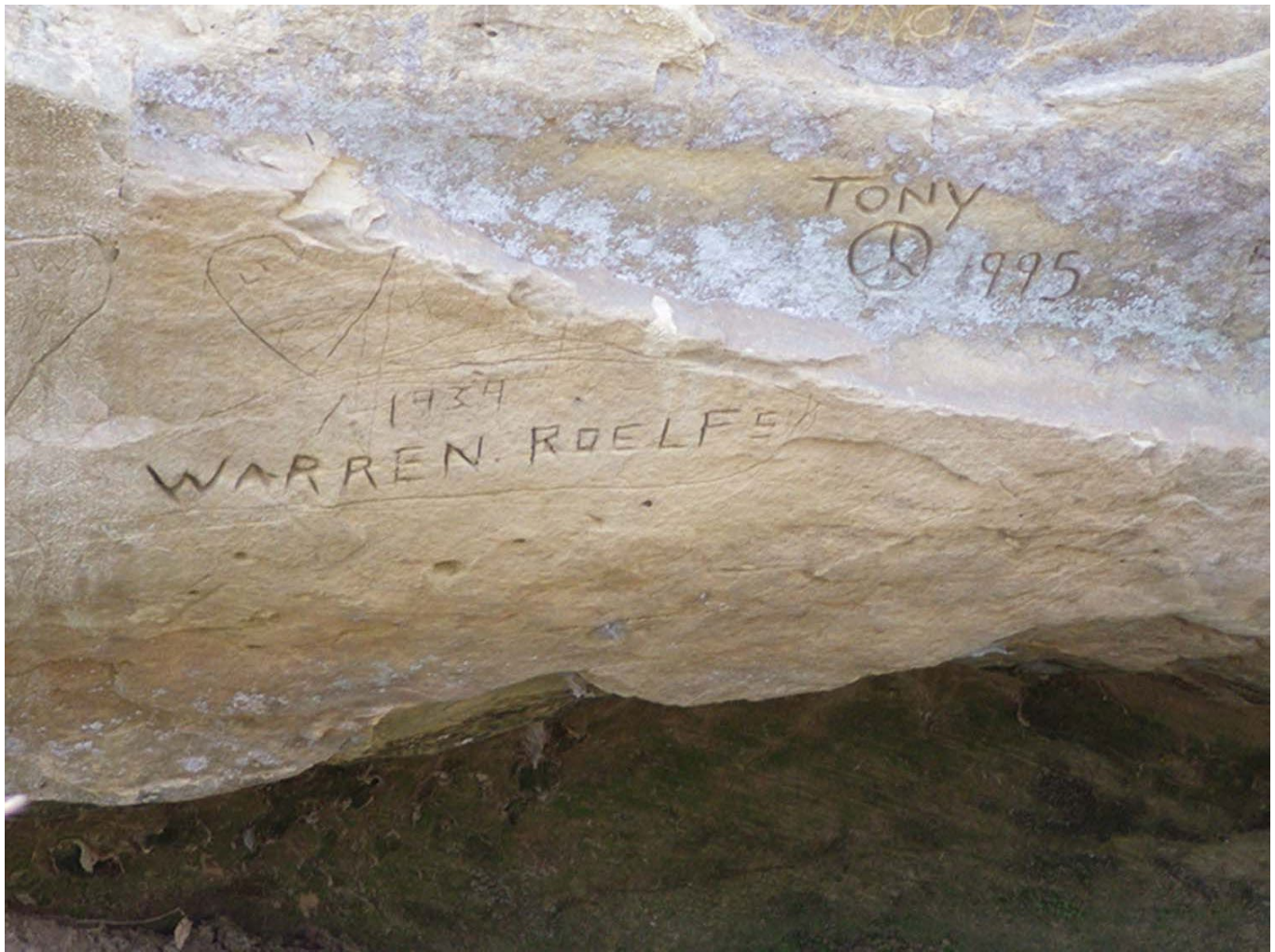
Crew shot from Rock Creek with West Ranch in background. From left: Nic Fogerty (NSHS), Rick Bell (NGPC), Jeff Bargar (NGPC), Katie Paitz (NSHS), and Nikki Krause (NGPC). Bob Hanover and Jason Tonsfeldt (NGPC) in background.



View from East Ranch to West Ranch.



Crew surveying rock face for cultural features (petroglyphs).



Most inscriptions consist of 20th century graffiti (as pictured), but some of the observed carvings may be attributed to older groups.



Survey along Rock Creek.