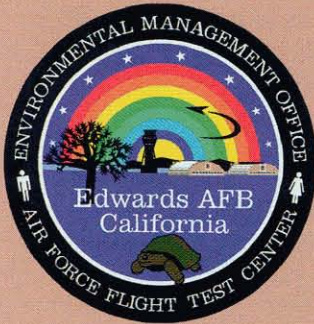


September 1997



Conservation  
**FACT SHEET**

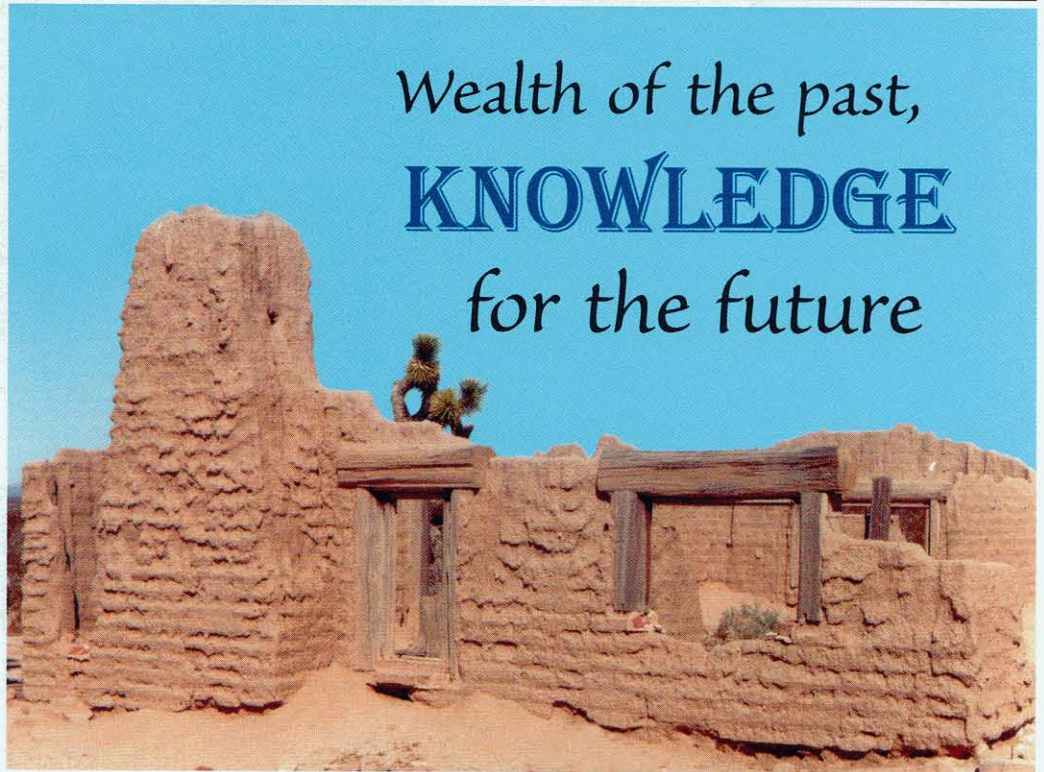
**Cultural Resources**

**Air Force Flight Test Center  
Office of Public Affairs  
AFFTC/PAE**

**5 E. Popson Ave., Bldg. 2650A  
Edwards AFB, CA 93524-1130**

**(805) 277-1454**

EDWARDS AFB ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT OFFICE



Wealth of the past,  
**KNOWLEDGE**  
for the future

**The Lansford  
homestead is one  
of the many historic  
cultural sites at  
Edwards AFB**

**H**istory is always in the making at Edwards Air Force Base. New aircraft are tested, cutting edge technologies are developed, and the endless flow of information challenges our human thirst for knowledge.

For centuries, the land occupied by Edwards AFB has been the setting for man's ever-changing presence in the Mojave Desert. Prehistoric peoples migrated to the dry lakebeds during the winter to gather food from native plants, pioneer travelers journeyed through the region on their way to the gold fields, the railroad sought a route through the desert and farmers settled in one of the last great frontiers of the West.

When the military discovered that the dry lakebeds were an unparalleled location for testing experimental aircraft, Edwards AFB took its place in aviation history.

Similar to natural resources such as plants and animals, the cultural aspects of Edwards AFB are resources, too, and must be managed responsibly.

The management of cultural resources at Edwards AFB is overseen by the Cultural Resources Section, which falls under the Conservation Pillar of Environmental Management. The section is responsible for ensuring that the prehistory and history of the federal lands on which Edwards AFB is situated are preserved for future generations.

Among the section's responsibilities are the preservation, protection and management of prehistoric and historic sites and the identification and evaluation of our cultural heritage using the best available expertise, information and technology.

To guide this effort, Air Force Instruction 32-7065 requires a Cultural Resources Management Plan be compiled every five years. This document was developed as guidance for bases to properly manage cultural resources while ensuring the Air Force's defense

*Continued on page 2*





*Continued from page 1*

requirements are met. Among the requirements outlined in the management plan are the consistent evaluation and treatment of cultural resource sites on Edwards AFB. It also outlines five areas for which the Cultural Resources Section is responsible: These include the protection of resources from potentially-harmful impacts during construction projects or other actions; coordination with Native American groups concerning federal laws, such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, which protects Native American human remains; inventorying, evaluating and curating artifacts associated with cultural sites on base; protection of significant sites and, when appropriate, nominating these sites for the National Register of Historic Places.

Because the document outlines the requirements previously established by federal and state agencies, preservation can be handled on a larger, programmatic scale. By eliminating the need for case-by-case reviews, this saves the Air Force time and

money, thus supporting the mission.

### **Edwards prior to Air Force occupation**

As base archaeologists methodically survey the 301,000 acres of Edwards AFB, they continue to discover prehistoric sites, which at this writing number more than 1,000.

Native peoples of the Antelope Valley may have lived here as early as 8,000 B.C., however, most of the prehistoric sites here are probably between 175 and 2,000 years old.

Four primary Native American cultures resided part time in the Antelope Valley: the Kawaiisu of the Tehachapi area, the Kitanemuk of the Tejon area, the Tataviam of the upper Santa Clara River area, and the Vayume of the Mojave River area. Some of these peoples visited the desert during the cooler months to gather yucca products, hard seeds and mesquite pods and beans before returning to the mountains for the summer.

The settlements on Edwards AFB occupied by these native peoples have yielded such

significant artifacts as arrowheads (or "projectile points"), hearths, milling stones and tools. These artifacts give us a view into what life was like for these cultures.

### **Then the settlers came**

Until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area was considered a remote wilderness by California settlers. Explorer John C. Fremont, in 1844, wrote of the Antelope Valley: "A vast desert plain spread before us, from which the boldest traveler turned away in despair."

Since then, activities have ranged from exploration to homesteading and from mining to ranching. Edwards AFB archaeologists have documented more than 1,000 historic cultural sites on base and continue to find more.

In 1885, the first homesteads were established in the Edwards AFB area, just to the west of Rosamond Dry Lake.

In 1910, the Corum family settled several miles to the south of the railroad station. Not long after, Clifford Corum was named postmaster of the post office of Muroc, a name devised by the Corums by spelling their name backward. The post office was to serve Muroc, which at first boasted a population of 25 to 30 people, but then grew to include two



stores and a school, in addition to the post office and train station.

The best known civilian resident of Edwards AFB was woman aviator Pancho Barnes, who broke several aeronautical records in the early years of flight. Barnes, known for her ribald sense of humor and the hospitality of her Happy Bottom Riding Club, befriended some of the most famous Edwards test pilots, including Gen. Chuck Yeager, who, in 1947, broke the sound barrier in the Bell X-1.

#### **Military history**

The military first came to the area in 1928. In 1935, Rogers Dry Lake was dedicated for military use, and shortly thereafter a bombing and gunnery range, used to train bombing crews throughout World War II, was established.

The Muroc Flight Test Base was a separate facility created in 1942 to test the Bell XP-59A Airacomet, the first American

---

### ***Cultural resources on federal lands must be preserved for future generations***

---

jet aircraft. In 1948, the bombing range, by then known as Muroc Army Air Field, was combined with Muroc Flight Test Base to form Muroc AFB. The base's training range function was abandoned after World War II in order to concentrate on flight test.

Important aircraft tested at the base, which was renamed Edwards AFB in 1949, include the Bell X-1, the X-15, and America's first generation of jet and supersonic aircraft. Meanwhile, base tenant facilities at the rocket laboratory and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory developed rocket engines for the country's manned and unmanned space programs.

Archaeological evidence of Edwards AFB military history

can still be found throughout the 400 square miles of the base. The range contains several examples of World War II bombing targets. The hangar which housed the XP-59A program still stands at North Base, and is potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historical Places as part of the Muroc Flight Test Base Historic District. In addition, Rogers Dry Lake has been designated as a National Historic Landmark.

#### **Preserving our heritage**

It's important that these historic sites are protected, and it's the law.

Whenever a project is proposed, the potential impacts of that project on cultural resources must be examined during the environmental impact analysis process. For instance, when retrofitting buildings or performing construction on undeveloped parts of the base, government organizations and base tenants may be required to consult with base archaeologists on the best way to protect resources.

In addition to these potential impacts, natural processes are also at work whittling away at the base's resources.

The Cultural Resources Section is actively trying to slow down the process of natural deterioration of significant sites, as well as protecting them from damage caused by looters, vandals and "amateur archaeologists."

Archeological sites residing on federal property are preserved by laws dating back to the Antiquities Act of 1906. More recently enacted is the Archeological Resource Protection Act and the Archeological and Historic Preservation Act, which protects sites more than 100 years old. Other laws include the National Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, among others.

At Edwards AFB, lawbreakers can be charged with trespass, theft or destruction of government property.

Besides being against the law, private collecting interferes with the archaeologist's job.

*Continued on page 4*



**Clockwise from left is another view of the Lansford adobe; Col. Hap Arnold, who first brought the military to Edwards; and base archaeologists examining a prehistoric site**





*Continued from page 3*

Every old bottle or coin looted from a historic site is one more piece of evidence lost from the collective knowledge we have about our history and culture. This historical "puzzle" is put together painstakingly by researchers and archaeologists trained in analyzing what roles our predecessors played and how it affects our lives today.

If all the artifacts are collected from the surface, then archaeologists must spend more effort excavating them from the ground. This costs time and money.

Some of the historic homestead sites on Edwards have been looted so often there's little left to learn from. Protecting the sites in the first place is the key.

To this end, a special unit of the security police has increased efforts to prevent looting at archaeological sites on base. Trained through the Archeological Resources Protection Training Program, the police are knowledgeable about the investigation of archeological crime scenes, site analysis, surveillance techniques and undercover operations.

#### **Curation and research**

In May 1997, Edwards AFB archaeologists were on the move.

The Cultural Resources Section centralized its lab, computer database and numerous collections of artifacts, as well as a multi-volume library, into a newly-built curation facility. This new facility is adjacent to the Air Force Flight Test Foundation Museum on Rosamond Boulevard.

The curation facility is the central point for all information and resources accumulated over the years, as well as all the knowledge acquired through previous work. The facility supports the mission by allowing easy access to those materials

## **Laws protecting archaeological sites**

**Antiquities Act of 1906**

**National Historic Sites Act of 1935**

**National Historic Preservation Act of 1966**

**Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974**

**Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act of 1976**

**American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1979**

**Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979**

**Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990**

**Indian Sacred Sites: Executive Order 13007 of 1996**

by qualified researchers and archaeologists and is cost effective by eliminating the need for off-base storage.

By centralizing, the Cultural Resources Section has maximized its effectiveness.

#### **Mojave Desert Ecosystem Initiative**

The Cultural Resources Section at Edwards AFB is among many resource management agencies participating in the Mojave Desert Ecosystem Initiative program.

This Department of Defense-sponsored initiative is a partnering effort between many federal, state and public agencies to improve land and resource management by consolidating detailed information about the Mojave Desert.

The information will include as many details as possible, ranging from the location of cultural and natural resources to topographical features and land usage.

Through computer networks and the Internet, land management agencies will have access to this data through the Geographic Information System, which uses high-end mapping software. The ability to access this information will help streamline management efforts.

The Mojave Desert Ecosystem Initiative is also available to the public on the Internet at the web site <http://mojave.army.mil>.

#### **Further information**

**Cultural Resources**

**Environmental Management**

**5 E. Popson Ave., Edwards, CA**

**93524-1130**

**(805) 277-1401**

