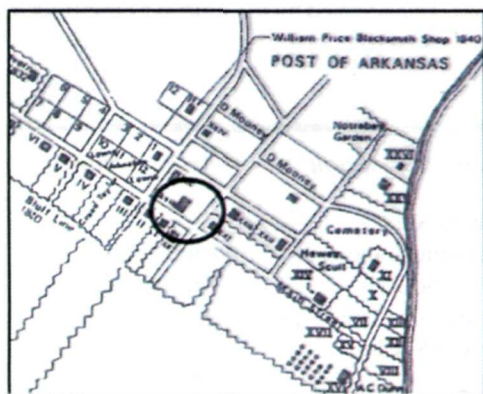




The Archeology of Bright's Trading House and Montgomery's Tavern



Introduction

While nothing visible remains of the late 18th and early 19th century community of Arkansas Post, archeological remnants of many of the buildings still survive to tell the story of the vibrant and changing character of Arkansas Post immediately following the Louisiana Purchase.

One such location was the site of two buildings important to the story of Arkansas Post: Bright & Company trading house (1804 to 1807) and Montgomery's Tavern (1818 to 1821).

The Dig

During the spring and summer of 1971, the Montgomery's Tavern site was excavated and documented by students and volunteers participating in the University of Arkansas Archeological Field School.

Supervised by graduate student Pat Martin, the dig involved professionals and students from six colleges and universities and volunteers from the communities surrounding Arkansas Post National Memorial.

Previous digs at Arkansas Post included a number of surveys done in the late 1950s in an attempt to locate remains of the mid-1700s French fort, a general survey of the town site area, and a 1966 dig at the site of the Arkansas State Bank.

Over thirty years later, the Montgomery's Tavern dig remains the most extensive and most productive archeological project to have been done at the Memorial Unit of the park, and is representative of the cultural resources remaining in the park.

"The House of Bright & Company"



In early 1804, immediately prior to the American takeover of Arkansas Post Jacob Bright was granted permission to establish a store "on the Arkansas, for the purpose of carrying on trade with... such Indians as may still visit the Post." A year later, Bright & Company were doing \$25,000 in trade, fully half of the business conducted at the Post.

Briefly granted exclusive rights to trade with Indians living on the Arkansas River, the success of Jacob Bright led to the closure of the government run

trading post here after five years. Bright and his partners commissioned groups of hunters, both Indians and Europeans, to hunt along the Arkansas River, all the way into present-day Oklahoma.

While in New Orleans on business in June 1807, Jacob Bright died suddenly. Reflecting on his death, his business partner said, "he was beloved and respected by all the Indian tribes..." Following Bright's death, the trading house at the Post was closed and sold.

Montgomery's Tavern



By early 1818, the property where Bright's trading house had stood had changed hands several times. The new landowner William Drope quickly rented the site to William Montgomery, who converted the major building on the lot into a tavern. The tavern quickly grew in importance as a central meeting place for the community. Militia meetings and elections took place at the tavern, in addition to its regular business as a hotel and restaurant establishment.

Naturalist John James Audubon, who stayed at the tavern in 1820, described it as a "large building that formerly perhaps saw the great Councils of Spanish

Dons." The quarters may have seemed rustic to Audubon, who said of the sleeping arrangements, "nothing but the want of blankets kept me from resting well."

The building's most important use came during the two years that the Post served as territorial capital. For a charge of \$37.00, Montgomery rented two rooms to serve the Arkansas General Assembly.

In 1821, following the removal of the capital to Little Rock, Montgomery left Arkansas Post and established a settlement at the mouth of the White River, which would come to be known as Montgomery's Point.

Summary

The dig and resulting reports make the site of Bright's Trading house and Montgomery's Tavern the best documented historic building site in the town site area.

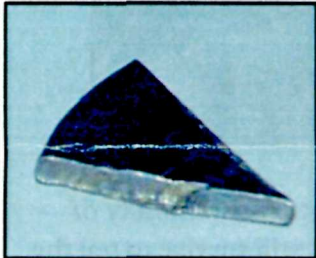
For nearly one hundred years before the Louisiana Purchase, Arkansas Post had survived as an isolated colonial settlement. American ownership of Louisiana brought a rapid transformation to the community here, in the form of increased settlement and commerce.

Bright's Trading House and Montgomery's Tavern,

occupied one lot in the town site and the two businesses embody the changes that took place here after Arkansas Post became an American town. Flints and trade beads represent a small amount of the trade that took place on the Arkansas River, and the fine ceramics, bottles and tableware show the finery that was served at the Tavern.

These artifacts provide an invaluable insight into the changing character of life at Arkansas Post and how it was transformed by the Louisiana Purchase from an isolated trading post to a bustling territorial capital.

Artifacts used in the Exhibit



Spanish 'Bit' – ARPO 913

<i>Item Description</i>	<i>Artifact Number</i>	<i>Item Description</i>	<i>Artifact Number</i>
Top Shelf		Third Shelf	
Flints-	ARPO 896 & 1083	Ceramic Fragments-	ARPO 3165
Bottle Bottom-	71- 657- 554b	Wine Bottles-	ARPO 4515
Barrel Tap/ Faucet-	ARPO 3124	Pearlware Plate Frags.-	ARPO 3164
Green Bottle Fragments-	ARPO 819	Oyster Shell-	ARPO 2903
Spanish Bit/Coin-	ARPO 913	Knife-	ARPO 3206
Bottle Neck Fragment-	71- 657- 549a	Forks-	ARPO 1569 & 1659
Blue Bottle Fragments-	ARPO 1091	Tumbler Base-	71- 657- 4602
Tumbler Fragments-	ARPO 1298	Button-	ARPO 1302
Second Shelf		Jewelry Setting-	ARPO 3065
Flints-	ARPO 3156	Jaw Harp-	ARPO 1486
Thimble-	ARPO 3133	Wine Bottle Seals-	ARPO 2879 & 2988
Frizzen-	ARPO 1729	Earthenware Fragments-	ARPO 2764
Glass Trade Beads-	ARPO 755, 879, 931, 1068,	Clay Pipe Fragments-	ARPO 2628
1069, 1071, 1103, 1159, 1624, 1625 & 2071		Bottom Shelf	
Flints-	ARPO 897 & 1695	Earthenware Fragments-	ARPO 2575
Buttons-	ARPO 1725	Key-	ARPO 1728
		Keyhole Plate-	ARPO 1730
		Earthenware Fragments-	ARPO 3040
		Earthenware Fragments-	ARPO 3073
		3 Gal. Wine Bottle Fragment-	ARPO 3180
		Earthenware Fragments-	ARPO 2472
		Clay Pipe Fragments-	ARPO 854

For Further Information:

To learn more about Arkansas Post around the time of the Louisiana Purchase as well as Bright's Trading House, Montgomery's Tavern, and the archeological work here, consult these sources:

- ✦ Bearrs, Edwin C. Montgomery's Tavern and Johnston and Armstrong's Store: Historic Structure Report / Historical Data. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, May 31, 1971.
- ✦ Bearrs, Edwin C. Structural History: Post of Arkansas, 1804- 1863 and Civil War Troop Movement Maps January, 1863. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, April 1971.
- ✦ Coleman, Roger E. The Arkansas Post Story. Fort Washington, PA: Eastern National, reprint 2003.
- ✦ Martin, Patrick E. An Inquiry into the Locations and Characteristics of Jacob Bright's Trading House and William Montgomery's Tavern. Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1977.



Keyhole Plate – ARPO 1730



Site of Bright's Trading House / Montgomery's Tavern

For more information on this and other topics, please contact the park:

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