Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's "Third Thursday Food for Thought" Series

The Historical George McJunkin Reimagined through His Archaeological Sites

Free Zoom Presentation by Archaeologist Brian Kenny

Thursday Sept. 21, 2023
7-8:30 pm Mountain Standard Time (Same as Pacific Daylight Time)

George McJunkin Remembered

See Next Pages

To register for the Zoom program go to https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_0SwzVEeWTdGHvp1Qyh_Wsg.
For more information contact Old Pueblo at 520-798-1201 or info@oldpueblo.org.

George McJunkin Reimagined . . .

The Folsom Hotel where George McJunkin died (Brian Kenny photo)

George McJunkin died in Folsom, New Mexico in January 1922. He was born a slave in Texas, was emancipated, and left home as a young man to become a cowboy in west Texas. McJunkin learned his trade from Mexican vaqueros and was known for superior cowboy skills and some wild adventures as he worked in the big cattle outfits that moved stock up from Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado to the transcontinental "Overland Route." He settled near Folsom, New Mexico, after the railroad reached there in 1888 when the Colorado and Southern Railroad was completed. McJunkin patented a homestead, built a house in town, and worked for local ranchers. He was well respected by the local community, and he became a Ranch Foreman and a leader of Black and Mexican cpwboys working for New Mexican ranchers.

George McJunkin in polo match (Public domain)

George McJunkin is widely known today as the original discoverer of a fossil bone site – the "Folsom type site" – in Wild Horse Arroyo after a devastating 1908 flood. This site turned out to be the spot where archaeologists in 1927 first confirmed the antiquity of "Early Man" in the Americas based on direct association of in-situ stone tools and Pleistocene bison bones. The Folsom site has been examined in popular and academic works, most recently by Southern Methodist University's Dr. David Meltzer. Among professional archaeologists there are generalized and continuing disputes regarding the type and extent of credit and recognition McJunkin should receive for our early historical understanding of the Folsom site. (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folsom_site and https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520246447/folsom.)

XYZ Ranch Fireplace (Public domain)

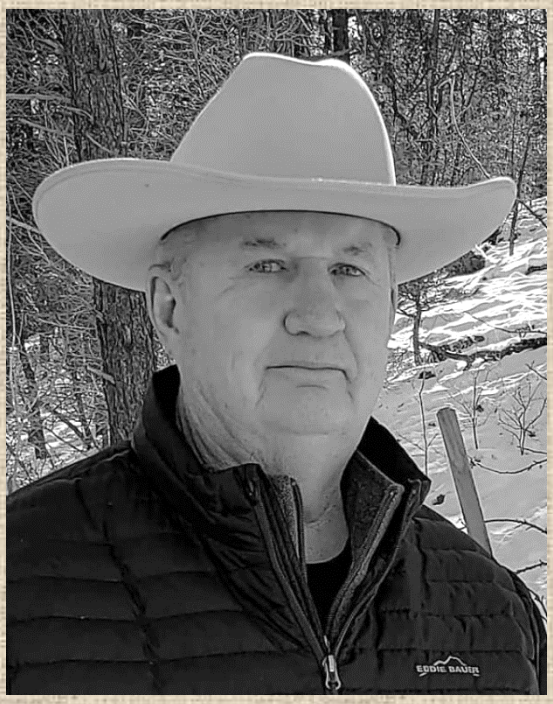
George McJunkin built a number of ranch facilities during his time in Folsom. Today, many of these facilities and habitation sites are obsolete, abandoned, or reused in alternate ways. These sites, and their contents and nature of construction, use, and abandonment hold the key to investigating McJunkin from alternate perspectives.

From 2021-2023, one hundred years plus after McJunkin's passing, Brian Kenny and colleagues initiated archival, ethnographic and archaeological research in the Folsom community. They visited known McJunkin sites to doc ument these resources using archaeological survey, community ethnography, archival research, and landscape scale characterization.

The members of "Team McJunkin" are now reviewing their field results and preparing for journal publication.

Left: "George Spring" at McJunkin patented homestead. Center and right: McJunkin-related artifacts – ca. 1870-1880
M G Co 10 bottle base (Mississippi Glass Company, St. Louis Missouri), shaving razor, buckles, and nails (Brian Kenny photos)

George McJunkin Reimagined . . .



This month's Third Thursday presenter Brian W. Kenny worked for Colorado State University providing cultural, environmental, and climate change analysis to the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force SAF/IEE program at the Pentagon. Prior work included permanent positions in federal agencies for 20 years, and Arizona state agencies for 25 years. A list of employers includes the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Department of Commerce, US Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs, the Arizona State Land Department, and Maricopa County, Arizona. His earliest work in archaeology was in cultural resource management contract archaeology.

Brian also served in the US Air Force and is a graduate of the Presidio of Monterey Defense Language Institute of Monterey, California, Air Force Cryptologic Intelligence Schools, and SERE & Air Crew Survival Schools. He holds degrees from Thunderbird (the American Graduate School of International Management) and from Arizona State University. He is a graduate of the Jesuit high school Brophy College Preparatory in Phoenix.

He has tried other things along the way, but at his core Brian is an applied anthropologist and archaeologist. Professional affiliations include the American Anthropological Association, the Society for Applied Anthropology, and the Society for American Archaeology.

Brian is married to Chin Kenny, the former Myongja Hwang, of Busan, Korea. They reside in the Lehi district of Mesa and in Flagstaff. Arizona. Together, they enjoy family gatherings, dogs, gardening, foraging for wild edible plants and herbs, cooking, wilderness hiking, long road trips around the Nation, and international travel.

Above: McJunkin Survey Crew – Making PBJ sandwiches for lunch, 2021

McJunkin survey crew – Chin & dogs, 2022

(Photos courtesy of Brian Kenny)

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