

Man's Impact on the Big Bend Area

Although Mariscal Mine is one major reminder of the human impact on the area, humans have inhabited the Big Bend Area for thousands of years. Just like the mines some of the other human impacts on the land can still be seen today. Students can research the different inhabitants of the area, the effect they had on the land, and what they left behind as a reminder of their presence. Below is a brief history of the presence of man in the area as well as what can still be seen in Big Bend today.

The presence of people in the area can be broken down into the Prehistoric Era and the Historic Era. There are six periods that the prehistoric era can be broken.

The Prehistoric Era (9000 B.C. – 1535 A.D)

- ***Late Pleistocene Man** (9000 B.C.)
- ***Paleo-Indian** (8000-6500 B.C.)
- ***Early Archaic** (6500-3000 B.C)
- ***Middle Archaic** (3000 – 500 B.C)
- ***Late Archaic** (500 B.C. – 1000 A.D.)
- ***Late Prehistoric** (1000 – 1535 A.D.)

Some evidence of human presence in the area is pottery, bow and arrows, and **petroglyphs**.



Photographs of petroglyphs on Rio Grande near Hot Springs in Big Bend National Park

The Historic Era (1535 A.D. – Present)

***The Indians** (1535 – 1850 A.D.)

The Comanches traveled through Big Bend via the **Great Comanche Trail** on their way to and from raids in the Mexican interior until the mid 1800's.

***The Spanish** (1535 – 1850 A.D.)

- In the Late 1700's "**Presidios**" or forts were built along the Rio Grande, however Presidio de San Vicente and Presidio de San Carlos were soon abandoned due to financial difficulties and Indian intrusions.
- In 1776 **Spanish Missions** were built in the area. You can still see the ruins of San Vicente and San Carlos.



Source: National Park Service http://www.nps.gov/bibe/historyculture/cultural-history_overview.htm

***The Mexicans and Anglos (1850 – Present)**

- In 1849 **military forts and outposts** were established across Tran Pecos Texas to protect settlers from the Indians.
- In 1870 **ranchers** migrated to Big Bend and by the 1900's sheep, goat, and cattle ranches occupied most of the landscape, which led to **overgrazing** of the desert environment.
- In the 1900's **mining operations** lead to development of the towns of Boquillas and **Terlingua** as well as farms to supply crops to the area. The Grand Canyon Company produced and supplied garden crops and vegetable to the Terlingua Mining Communities.



Terlingua Ghost Town: Rock Ruins near Hot Springs



Terlingua Ghost Town: Old Adobe near Hot Springs

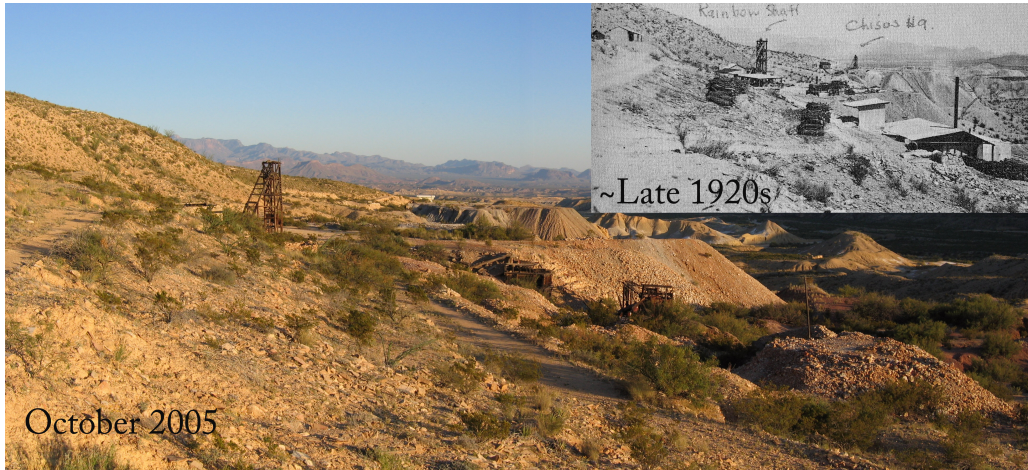


Old Post Office at the Hot Springs on the Rio Grande



Terlingua Cemetery

Terlingua Rainbow Mine





The impact that humans had on the land concerned many who loved the beauty of the Big Bend Area and on **June 12, 1944 Big Bend National Park was created** to preserve the beauty for future generations.



Out in the Desert near Terlingua

References:

- "Soldiers, Ranchers, and Miners in the Big Bend Area" by Clifford B. Casey (September 1969)
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http://www.nps.gov/bibe/historyculture/cultural-history_overview.htm
- The Original Settlers of Big Bend
http://www.nps.gov/bibe/historyculture/original_settlers.htm
- A Discovery of Cultures Past and Present: An Educator's Guide to Big Bend National Parks Fourth Grade Outreach Education Programs
http://www.nps.gov/bibe/forteachers/upload/cultural_guide.pdf