Archaeological Dig Undertaken At “The Dry”

By Susan Pieper

South of Manzanola and north of Highway 10 sit the remains of a settlement established during the early part of the 1900s.

This community was inhabited by several families who came from Oklahoma by covered wagon to homestead. The year was 1916 and this town was called The Dry.

Just like the southeastern Colorado area in which the settlement was located, water was at a premium. There was, however, a spring near the town, a spring that still supplies water today.

Although the settlement is gone, with only the skeletons of a few trees and some crumbling foundations to mark the spot where it once stood, some of the descendants of those homesteaders still remain in Otero County.

The last of their families “proved” their legacy and the memories they have of either visiting or living at The Dry will continue to live and be passed down in story. Over the years, there were still a couple of houses standing, they were burned by vandals.

What physically is left is mostly underground and tomorrow (Thursday) from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., the public is invited to a demonstration of ground penetrating radar that has been used at the site to locate artifacts. Denver University anthropologist Dan Lea has been working at the site to “discover how the community worked.”

They are looking for any clues to various relationships the inhabitants of The Dry had with other African-American homesteaders in communities in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Colorado.

If you have never been to The Dry, this is a chance to get up close and personal with some of Otero County's history. Take Otero County Road 14 south of Manzanola past the cemetery and turn right (west) at the sign which will mark the route to the dig.

Follow the road, which bears left and pass through the gate. Remember that this is rattlesnake country and snakes are out. Attendees are advised to wear long pants and shoes, not sandals.

Also, it’s a good idea to bring water. It’s hot.