

## A.T. Jackson

1895 – 27 January 1974, 79

### Pioneer Caver Remembered

by Tom Meador, *The Texas Caver*, June-July 1974, 19(6-7):104.

A.T. Jackson (NSS 502), pioneer Texas Archeologist and caver, died at Austin, Texas, January 27th, [1974], at the age of 76. In the early 1930's he was hired as a field foreman for the Department of Anthropology at the University of Texas. He quickly rose to a key position in the state's archeological program. Mr. Jackson participated in the exploration, archeological survey and excavation of many shelter caves and caves across the state. Through the years he published a number of papers on Texas archeology and other subjects. Among cavers Mr. Jackson was probably best known for his multiple contributions to the NSS Bulletin 10, *The Caves of Texas*, which "could not have been prepared without his extensive knowledge of Texas Caves and his untiring efforts." A number of his papers are sprinkled with notes about the state's spelean history. Perhaps least known of these was Mr. Jackson's important article, in the November 1950 issue of *Hunter's Frontier Times*, which contains notes (from sources no longer available to us) on the Civil War mining of saltpeter in Texas Caves. That "caveman" from Austin will be missed.



A.T. Jackson at a dig.

## Biographical Note from the Briscoe Center for American History

<https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utcah/00100/cah-00100.html>

**Alvin Thomas Jackson** was born in Bagdad, Texas, in 1895. He went to a one-room school and later to larger rural schools and high school in Llano, Texas. He worked for Wells Fargo and studied for two years at a business college in Tyler before becoming a statistician for the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station in College Station. During World War I he served in a personnel office and eventually became second and then first lieutenant in the United States Army. After the war he served for five years as an accountant for Texaco in Houston.

For health reasons, Jackson returned to Llano and began his career as a freelance writer. He regularly published stories in the *Dallas News*, the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, and the *Houston Chronicle*. In the late 1920s, Professor J. E. Pearce was attempting to establish the UT Department of Anthropology, and he offered a job to Jackson as a field archaeologist for UT. Jackson served in this capacity for around 13 years, until Pearce died and the University started requiring college degrees of its instructors. His time at UT, however, resulted in the publishing of his book *Picture-Writing of Texas Indians* in 1938.

Jackson became a statistician for the Austin Railway System in 1942 and continued to write articles, many about horse-drawn streetcars. He worked there for about 13 years, then spent about ten in Austin's finance department before retiring in 1967. His book on the flour mills of pioneer Texas, *Mills of Yesteryear*, was published by the Texas Western Press at the University of Texas at El Paso in 1971.

A longtime member who held various offices in the Texas Archaeological Society, Jackson was made a Fellow in 1971. He died in Austin on January 27, 1974.

### A.T. Jackson's Legacy

by William R. Elliott

A.T. was the first person to propose conserving a Texas cave for scientific and cultural reasons. His work at Fate Bell Shelter in 1932 led to his concern for Seminole Canyon and its resources. In 1938 Jackson and a geologist tried to persuade the National Park Service and the Texas State Parks Board to set aside Seminole Canyon as an archaeological park. In 1948, in NSS Bulletin 10, *The Caves of Texas*, he said, "For reasons not disclosed, the project was never undertaken. Today there is still no protection from vandals for irreplaceable works of art—in the form of huge murals on the walls. There is still time for the area to be given park status—if we work hard and fast..." Jackson's idea was prophetic, and it was discussed for years. In the 1970s the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department acquired portions of two ranches, finally opening Seminole Canyon State Historical Park in February 1980." An additional jewel was found in the park in the 1980s when Seminole Sink, an ancient pit burial site, was discovered and studied.

From Elliott, William R. 1994. Conservation of Texas Caves and Karst, pp. 85-98 in Elliott, W.R. and G. Veni. *The Caves and Karst of Texas*. NSS Convention Guidebook. 342 pp.

*Compiled by William R. Elliott and Dale Pate, 22 January 2020*