

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



www.sjbas.org

The Moki Messenger

December 2016

Next SJBAS Meeting – Annual Holiday Celebration!

Thursday, December 8th, 6:00 p.m.

Ballroom, Fort Lewis College

The party will begin with a social hour at 6:00 p.m. with a cash bar and appetizer table followed by dinner and program activities. The dinner will be buffet style and entrees will be chicken and beef selections. Also included are side dishes, salad, dinner rolls, bread/butter, tea and coffee, and dessert.

Activities will include introduction of new society members; door prizes; election of 2017 chapter officers; a review of the 2016 SJBAS activities and activities planned for 2017. Join your friends for this fun party! Peggy Morris will again conduct a silent auction to benefit our John W. Sanders Internship Fund, and members may invite non-members to attend.

To make reservations, follow this link to the [Holiday Party Reply Form 2016](#), complete the form, include a check payable to SJBAS, and mail it to Mark Gebhardt, Treasurer, 107 St. Andrews Circle, Durango, CO 81301. Deadline is December 4th.

For additional information, contact Foxie Mason at fmason@frontier.net or phone 970-247-0252; or Jim Mueller at rhondaandjim@msn.com.

SJBAS Meeting Report – November 10th

Our meeting was held in conjunction with the Life Long Learning Lecture Series, so we did not conduct any SJBAS business. Jim Judge presented: Confronting Climate Change – Then and Now.

Field Trip Report - Eastern Pueblitos of the Dinetah – October 15th

Trip Leader: Robert Powell

We left Santa Rita Park at 8:00 am on Saturday morning, October 15, drove south on US 550 and stopped in Aztec for a quick break. From there we drove east on US 64 to the Largo Canyon side road east of Blanco and stopped to discuss some general aspects of our trip. Weather was perfect: clear skies, cool weather and almost no wind. I described the general geology of the area that allowed construction of flagstone buildings; the ecology that provided some farmland and plant food for numerous pronghorns, deer and elk; and the history that caused Pueblo peoples to join Navajos and

form a bicultural society for two or three generations. We continued 27 miles east on US 64, past abandoned Navajo City, part way up Gobernador Valley to NM 527, where we turned north. It was a beautiful drive with clear blue skies, green meadows, multiple red cliffs and golden cottonwoods. We drove north to MP 11 on NM 527 that is paved between potholes.

It was time to shift into 4-wheel drive; the one-mile road up onto Francis Mesa is rough and steep. It is not passable, for me anyway, if it is wet or ungraded. Road contractors funded by gas companies had graded the rough road two days earlier; it is not a county road. Up on the mesa the roads were smoother and leveler, but had multiple junctions where one could make the wrong turn. I supplied the others with a road guide that they could use if they wanted to go back later. After another 2 1/2 miles on the mesa we arrived at the parking lot for Francis Canyon Pueblito. The walk to the site is level and short, only about 250 yards.

The site is located at the edge of a small cliff near the north rim of Francis Canyon Rincon. Its elevation is 6795 feet. The local habitat is open pinyon/juniper forest with a few sage/grass meadows. Some of the beams in the structures are from Douglas Fir, but those trees do not live nearby any longer. Two small seeps are in the cliff faces below the pueblito and 200 yards to the northeast. Suitable farmland is in the bottomlands about a mile away.



The Francis Canyon Pueblito is one of the largest, farthest east and closest to and north of the San Juan River. It was haphazardly arranged and did not occupy a fortified location. It was a 40-unit complex of rooms including a three-story, two-room tower and 12 additional rooms and storage bins. It is classified as Gobernador Phase with tree-ring dates of 1715–1745. Most of the smaller rooms no longer have standing walls, only foundation stones. It was unusual in having two Spanish-style corner fireplaces. The cooking area was separated from the main structure. Two courtyards were among the buildings. Grinding basins were in the bedrock near the main building. Apparent fork-stick structures were nearby. The site was clearly multicultural with classic Navajo units, Pueblo-style stone structures and Spanish-style fireplaces. It is certainly one of the most interesting of all pueblitos.

After we finished viewing the site, we ate lunch at the trailhead and discussed the site. We did not return on the road that we had come up earlier; we drove 4.5 miles northwest on Francis Mesa, then dropped down and southwest 3 miles to paved NM 539. Along the way, we had interesting views of Gobernador Valley. We later drove along the top of Navajo Dam, turned 180° onto NM 173 and headed to the parking lot for Simon Canyon Tower. It was later in the day, at lower elevation and much warmer.



I walked with the group until a steep hill, but could not safely go farther in the heat. I waited in the shade of cottonwood trees while they continued to the tower that is on a small bench above Simon Wash at an elevation of 5840 feet. This site is in a deep canyon with cottonwoods, oak, thick sage and scattered pinyon and junipers. There is a small spring below the site. Water in the wash often has too much dissolved calcite to be drinkable. The site is a simple one-room tower perched on a large boulder with no nearby living quarters. It is

also classified as Gobernador Phase. Access to the tower was by a ladder and by hand- and toe-holds in the face of the rock. It is not at all obvious why it was built north of the San Juan River and so far from the other sites.

When the others returned, I changed the trip plan and decided to provide a bit of variety to the day's visits. Instead of driving directly back to Aztec, we headed north up Caballo Canyon on a gravel road. We stopped and walked a short distance to look at some natural arches. We later drove by, but did not walk to, a larger arch. We then drove northwest in and out of canyons with multiple side roads to a road that used to lead to a site that I wanted to visit. It is now closed. I did not drive that road last summer and the Google Earth photo that I had is out of date. After two miss-tries I headed back toward Aztec on Hart Canyon Road. After a mile, we saw a newly constructed road and tried it. It was much better than the former road. We went to the outstanding Natural Bridge in Arch Rock wash. Well worth the side trip! From there we drove northwest on a badly rutted and pot-holed road to Cedar Hill and US 550 and arrived back at Santa Rita Park in late afternoon.

- Submitted by Bob Powell

Upcoming Field Trips and Activities

December 8	SJBAS Holiday Party – Fort Lewis College Ballroom
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Colorado Archaeological Society (CAS) News

The **Fall 2016 issue of THE SURVEYOR Newsletter** is available on the CAS website at:
<http://www.coloradoarchaeology.org/PUBLICATIONS/Newsletters/Newsletters.htm>.

CAS Surveyor <http://www.coloradoarchaeology.org/PUBLICATIONS/Newsletters/Newsletters.htm>

CAS Bulletin Board <http://www.coloradoarchaeology.org/BULLETINBOARD/bulletinboard.htm>

CAS Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1425711501080053/>

Hisatsinom Chapter News

[Hisatsinom Newsletter - December 2016](#)

Archaeology in the Southwest

Cooperative Management Would Allow for Full Tribal Participation in a Bears Ears National Monument

On Oct. 21, the Department of the Interior released a secretarial order encouraging cooperative land management partnerships between federal agencies and tribes. This comes at a prescient time in Utah when tribes are unsatisfied with how federal, state and local governments have managed their ancestral lands. This dissatisfaction is manifest in the proposal for a Bears Ears National Monument, which calls for the protection of some 1.9 million acres in southern Utah sacred to five tribes. But while the feds and tribes may find themselves in agreement, Utah residents may be left with crucial questions like, “What is collaborative management, and what will it do for me?” – Salt Lake Tribune [Read article.](#)

Commemorating Historic Colorado Road Proving Difficult

Though conversations have been ongoing for years, national and state historic designations for the Animas Canyon Toll Road between La Plata and San Juan counties remains pending. Before the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad,

pioneers traveled from Animas City to Silverton on a wagon road that wound from Bakers Bridge to Silverton, east of U.S. Highway 550. – Durango Herald [Read article.](#)

Can National Monuments Be Dissolved?

As his presidential tenure winds down in the coming weeks, Barack Obama is expected to decide whether to designate some proposed national monuments, including Bears Ears in Utah and two others on Utah’s borders with neighboring states. But Donald Trump’s surprise victory in the race to succeed Obama likely changes the political calculus behind such decisions, which hold so much weight for southern Utah residents who have to live with these federally protected landscapes. On the one hand, Obama won’t be able to punt monument decisions to a Democratic successor, which could make him more inclined to cement his conservation legacy by adding to his already long list of designations. – Salt Lake Tribune [Read article.](#)

BLM Abandons Public Meeting on Fracking at Chaco

Bureau of Land Management personnel were heavily criticized Thursday for walking out of what was supposed to be a community meeting in Shiprock, New Mexico, to discuss the future of oil and gas drilling near Chaco Canyon. On Thursday, the BLM hosted the first of eight planned “scoping meetings” – in partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs – intended to engage members of the Navajo Nation on concerns regarding drilling, as well as fracking, on sacred lands. – Durango Herald [Read article.](#)

SJBAS Officers

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Webmaster and email coordinator	Lyle Hancock	lylehancock@bresnan.net

San Juan Basin Archaeological Society – Membership Renewal

Membership renewals are due by January 31st each year. Please complete the [SJBAS Annual Membership Form](#), make your check payable to ‘SJBAS’ and mail with the Annual Membership Form to our chapter treasurer: **Mark Gebhardt, 107 St. Andrews Circle, Durango, CO 81301.**