

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **April 21, 2011**

Destination: **Yucca House National Monument**

Leaders: **Richard Robinson** Number of Participants: **12**

Thursday April 21, 2011, the Yucca House site, also known as the Aztec Springs Village was the destination of an SJBAS trip. The site today does not look much different from its appearance 100 years earlier. It remains today as an undeveloped site. We started out identifying various features with a 1919 site map made by Fewkes, then replaced it with a more detailed one made by Holmes in 1874, and finally, used the most recent one, 2001, by Glowacki, Dale and Tradlener. Each site map helped us interpret more of the mounds and depressions.

This site has a strategic location between the Mancos and McElmo drainages, with easy access to several pathways, nearby springs, and great agricultural land in the valley. The site is quite large, played an important part in the history of the area and had two periods of occupation described as being a Chacoan Outlier (1050 to 1150 AD) and a Post Chacoan (1225 to 1300 AD). A spring divides the West complex into N/S sections. Divisions are common today in the Rio Grande pueblos, both physically and socially. The walls were constructed using the Mesa Verde outcrop which is a fossiliferous limestone. There are various estimates on the number of rooms but a total of 650 seems reasonable, with 81 declared kivas and 21 possible ones. There are even two great kivas, two towers and a bi-walled structure present.

The oral histories and legends of the Santa Clara, Tewa people claim they lived in the valley of Yucca Mountain (Montezuma Valley). There are links suggesting that they migrated to the South and may have lived at the Guadalupe site, a Chacoan Outlier, prior to moving up the Rio Grande Valley.

We were a couple of weeks early to see the giant Claret Cup cacti mass in bloom, but there were many closed but ready to open. We left, grateful that President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the site a National Monument on Dec 19, 1919 with 9.6 acres and that Hallie Ismay made a 24.47-acre donation in 1990. We look forward to renewed interest in this site and increased research interest and physical changes to come. We had delightful weather for the morning and concluded our trip with a tasty lunch in Cortez on our way home.

- Prepared by Rich Robinson

Participants: Rich and Linda Robinson, Jerri Lincoln, Bob Powell, Bill and Letha Cagle, Gail Schulz, John and Bev Moore, Bob Danielson, John Sanders, Shaila Van Sickle