

# SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



## FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **May 3 – 6, 2015**

Destination: **Moab, Green River and the San Rafael Swell – Rock Art**

Leader: **Bob Powell**

Number of Participants: **12**

Our group of twelve met at the Hole-in-the-Rock Rest Area fifteen miles south of Moab to sign in with Bob, do introductions, and get a trip briefing. Bob handed out spiral bound trip pamphlets that were full of information about the geology along our route and the rock art we would see. The first site we visited was the Golf Course site in Entrada Sandstone situated adjacent to the Moab golf course. We had lunch at Zax in Moab and headed over to Utah Scenic Byway 279, a.k.a. the Potash Road, along the Colorado River to visit petroglyph sites of the Formative period. One 125-foot-long panel displayed a wide variety of anthropomorphs, animal and abstract figures. Another panel had a large bear. There were many climbers along the cliff walls known to local climbing aficionados as “Wall Street” and a fellow came along flying a drone. Yuck! Who would have ever imagined... From there we drove to Green River. About half the group set up camps in Green River State Park while the rest checked into motels.



After a brief break, we formed carpools and drove to several interesting panels along the Green River in Gray Canyon. Although the weather was threatening, we were lucky to have dry roads as the black Mancos shale is impossible to drive on if it gets wet. We drove about 16 miles to the end of the road at the Nefertiti Rock parking area to view a beautiful Fremont panel depicting many elk. At another site along the river on a heavily patinated slab were two large trapezoidal Fremont human figures. Then we drove several miles up Tusher Canyon to view some very old Fremont and Archaic petroglyphs of elk, sheep, dots, necklaces, simple human figures and a footprint. We returned to Green River just in time for happy hour and dinner.

On the second day, we drove toward Price and then west on the Green River Cutoff Road to the foot of Cedar Mountain to see several Fremont petroglyph panels on large boulders that had tumbled down from the cliffs above. We were near an old railroad grade and there were a few inscriptions left by the railway workers in 1881. We ate lunch at an isolated developed rest area and then drove south down Buckhorn Wash to see several sites including the famous 130-foot-long Buckhorn Wash Pictograph Panel. This amazing panel was right along the road and had suffered significant vandalism. However, in 1995, an effort by professional restoration workers removed much of the

graffiti. There were numerous Barrier Canyon style pictographs and some Fremont petroglyphs. Then we continued

down to the San Rafael River Recreation Site and stopped to admire spectacular monolith towers and high cliffs surrounding the site. We returned to Green River for the evening.

On the third morning the weather looked pretty wet, but we headed out to see what the road conditions were like. After driving a few miles on muddy roads toward Swazey's Cabin and rock art sites at the Head of Sinbad, we decided to abort that part of the trip and see other sites along paved or surfaced roads. We returned to I-70 and took the Moore Cutoff at the Eagle Canyon Overlook. We stopped at a turnout to see various petroglyphs, including a very large snake, and some dinosaur tracks. Then we drove a few miles to the Rochester Panel trailhead, had lunch, and hiked about a third of a mile to the famous Rochester Panel



that has hundreds of petroglyphs. We spotted many cowboy glyphs, including horses and mules with riders, in Muddy Creek Canyon below the Rochester site. Later we returned the way we had come to see if we could find the "juggler" petroglyph. We had a nice walk, but no luck finding the rock art. We continued for a couple more miles along the dirt road to view large "cannonball-like" concretions that had formed in one of the sandstone layers above Short Canyon. We returned to Green River with enough time for happy hour at the campground before heading to Ray's Tavern for a fun group dinner and celebration.

On the fourth morning, we drove to the popular Sego Canyon rock art site north of the deserted settlement of Thompson Springs. There were separate panels of culturally distinct Barrier Canyon, Fremont, and Ute pictographs and petroglyphs.

- Prepared by Bob Powell

Participants: Bob Powell, Jim Mueller, Rhonda Raffo, Carl Gutknecht, Dennis Aronson, Cathy Callahan, Elaine and Michael Moravan, Tish and Pete Varney, Barb and Lyle Hancock