

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **May 9 – 11, 2016**

Destination: **Puye Cliff Dwellings and Bandelier National Monument**

Leaders: **Barb and Lyle Hancock**

Number of Participants: **12**

Twelve SJBAS members met at Santa Rita Park on a rainy Monday morning and drove to Espanola, New Mexico where we stopped for a delicious lunch at La Cocina Restaurant. The first official stop on the field trip was Puye Cliff Dwellings, a National Historic Landmark and the ancestral home of today's Santa Clara Pueblo people. By the time we arrived, the skies had cleared and we had fantastic weather for the remainder of the trip. We toured the original Harvey House bed and breakfast built at the beginning of the 20th century and Puye Cliff Dwellings museum while waiting for our tour to begin. Sam, an elder of the Santa Clara Pueblo, was our guide. He spent part of his childhood living at the cliff dwellings, as his father oversaw maintenance for many years. In addition to being an interesting fellow with many stories to tell, Sam possessed a wealth of knowledge about the cliff dwellings and the Santa Clara Pueblo people. Our two-hour tour turned into a three-hour tour, and we learned a lot. There were many cavates (cave rooms carved into the soft volcanic tuff cliffs) to explore, many petroglyphs, several ladders to climb, and a fun hike to the top of the mesa where the walls of the excavated pueblo are still standing. After our tour we drove to Bandelier National Monument, set up camp at the group campsite in the Juniper Campground, and enjoyed a late happy hour under clear skies.





Tuesday morning, most of the group hiked directly from the campground into Frijoles Canyon on the Frey Trail. This scenic trail provided the first access into the canyon before the roads were built. We checked in at the visitor center and then walked the main trail through Tyuonyi Pueblo and along the cliffs where numerous cavates were located. The most closely related descendants of these ancient pueblo people now live at Cochiti Pueblo, located south of Bandelier along the Rio Grande. We hiked another mile up the canyon and climbed 140 feet of ladders to reach the spectacular Alcove site and kiva. Fires in the drainage above the monument caused major flooding in 2011 and the effects were still quite evident today. Later we toured the museum, watched a film, and hiked 1.5 miles to the Upper Falls. We returned to camp

in time for a leisurely afternoon and happy hour.

On Wednesday, we broke camp and headed to an outlier site of Bandelier known as Tsankawi Village. The most closely related descendants of this pueblo now live nearby at San Ildefonso Pueblo, located just to the east along the Rio Grande. We hiked the 1.5-mile loop trail that took us to the pueblo ruins on top of the mesa and along the cliff sides where there were numerous cavates and petroglyphs. There were several ladders to negotiate and many extremely narrow trails beaten into the soft volcanic tuff. Then we drove to Ojo Caliente Hot Springs Resort where we had lunch. After lunch, we hiked about a mile to Posi-ouinge, a large P-IV pueblo ruin on a low mesa right above the hot springs and Ojo Caliente River. Clearly arranged large rubble mounds, some kiva depressions, and many potsherds were most visible. The descendants of this pueblo now reside at San Juan Pueblo. After exploring this site everyone headed back to Durango and arrived safely home before dark.



Suggestions if trip is repeated: There are so many sites to visit in this area, a longer trip could easily be done.

- By Lyle Hancock

Participants: Nancy and Rege Leach, Joan and Byron Kellogg, Cathy and Jim Callan, Sherry Suenram, Susan Whitfield, Lydine and Tom Hannula, and Barb and Lyle Hancock