

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **June 8 - 9, 2018**

Destination: **Shavano Petroglyph Tour and Historical-Geology Tour of Ouray's Perimeter Trail**

Leaders: **Joan and Byron Kellogg**

Number of Participants: **7**

We met our Shavano Valley Petroglyph docent, Alma Evan, at the Ute Indian Museum just south of Montrose, Colorado. After driving 5.5 miles west of Montrose, she led us through the sacred Shavano Valley Petroglyphs Site located on the eastern edge of the Uncompahgre Plateau. The Shavano Valley Rock Art Site is one of the most important concentrations of rock art in western Colorado used by Archaic and Ute peoples dating back to 1,000 BC. The site contains twenty-six panels of rock art.



The natural artesian well at the base of the site has historically attracted native hunters and gatherers. Alma, having grown up in this farming valley, also shared information about the origin of the current irrigation system. From the rocky hillside where petroglyph walls are located, we all had a commanding view of the fertile valley below. It is commonly believed that this area was a crossroads for the Ute Indians and one of many ceremonial grounds for celebrating the coming of spring through the Bear Dance.

Participants were especially intrigued by the "tunnel cave". We walked through a tunnel-like rock formation with petroglyphs on both sides. When we emerged from the other side we were all slightly older.

Much of the well-preserved rock art was comprised of farming and hunting depictions. Alma shared a modern-day map overlay that closely resembled a petroglyph map believed to depict the Shavano Valley.





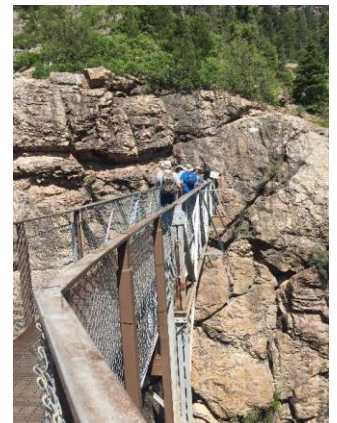
Ouray Perimeter Trail Historical and Geological Tour

We had the good fortune of having, Rick Trujillo, an Ouray native, as our guide. Rick not only shared a great deal of information about the history of Ouray, he also described the very impressive geological features of the Ouray area. We even heard about Rick's exciting adventures growing up in the mountainous terrain.

Our tour of the Perimeter Trail began at the Baby Bathtubs, a series of depressions carved into a streambed. We then climbed through beautiful white fir groves, an historic potato patch and lovely glistening aspen. We emerged on a high point with incredible scenic views of Mt. Abram, Hayden Mountain and the Uncompahgre Gorge. This was a fine opportunity for Rick to discuss the various geological features, including the fact that we were standing on rocks about 1.7 billion years old. We were especially interested in the origin of the geological names of the formations and various mountains that preceded the ones that currently surround Ouray.



After walking through the Ouray Ice Park, we followed the path up to the bridge above the Box Canyon Falls which rushes 300 feet below. Before walking into the old Ouray water tunnel, we discussed the great geological non-conformity that is evident in the rocky hillsides. Rick also pointed out similar rock formations and features found in other parts of our country such as the red rock in Animas Valley.



The trail continues along the steep slopes of the mountains that flank the west side of town before dropping down to Oak Street where many old Victorian homes are located. We walked through the west side of town to the Ouray Hot Springs for a quick break. With our water bottles full, we began a series of steep climbs following the cliff's edge above the north end of Ouray. The narrow path is exposed to some very sharp drop-offs. The cool spray from the Cascade Falls was a welcomed relief, as well as a picturesque view of these 100+ ft. falls. Continuing to climb through beautiful aspen groves, we soon reached the road that lead us back to the Baby Bathtubs. Even though there were some steep sections along the hike and a hint of smoke from the Durango area fires, it was very rewarding to learn about our neighboring town to the north. A big thank you goes to Rick Trujillo for sharing his extensive knowledge and slowing down every now and then so that we could catch our breath!

Trip participants: Randy Graham, Flow Zerr, Jim Mueller, Rhonda Raffo, Steve Harris, Byron Kellogg and Joan Kellogg (field trip organizer) We had several folks who could not join us due to the fire situation in Durango.

- By Joan Kellogg