

# SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



## FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **September 22 - 25, 2018**

Destination: **Northern Arizona Exploration**

Leaders: **Barb and Lyle Hancock**

Number of Participants: **7**

Participants were Randy Graham, Suzie and Brad Grimm, Rhonda Raffo and Jim Mueller, and trip leaders Barb and Lyle Hancock. We met for a picnic lunch at the CDOT rest area west of Mancos and then drove to Navajo National Monument. We set up camp in the less developed Canyon View campground, stopped by the visitor center to sign up for the Sunday guided tour to Betatakin, and enjoyed a fun happy hour looking over the Tsegi Canyon system.

We broke camp early on Sunday morning to meet our 8:15 a.m. tour. Our National Park Service guide, Kalkiyanna Yazzie, was a recent graduate of Fort Lewis College. She was personable, well-informed, and a fun person to visit with. We hiked down the Aspen Trail, including 927 steps, but the hike was not too long and the canyon nice and cool in the morning. Visitors are not allowed inside the Betatakin cliff dwelling due to unstable rock in the huge alcove. In fact, a large portion of the original site has been obliterated by a devastating rock fall. The cliff dwelling has had minimal reconstruction or stabilization, so one gets to appreciate the original construction.

Betatakin was built in an enormous alcove measuring 452 feet high and 370 feet wide between 1267 and 1286. Near the end of the century, the cliff dwelling was abandoned, so the estimated 125 Ancestral Puebloan residents were here for a very short period. We spent over an hour learning about the village and discussing the large pictographs of four clans: Deer, Fire, Flute, and Water. We took our time hiking out of the canyon and enjoyed a picnic lunch at the Monument picnic ground.

Next stop was a brief, unplanned visit to the historic Cameron Trading Post. We checked out the beautiful dining room, a real architectural treasure, and took a quick look inside the fabulous Native American Art Gallery, recommended for serious collectors. Then we



were off to Wupatki National Monument where we did a self-guided tour of the main pueblo village. People

had been living in the vicinity in scattered pit house villages for hundreds of years, but a large influx came to the Wupatki area after the eruption of Sunset Crater around 1085. Archaeologists believe that thinner layers of ash and cinders in this area allowed for more productive farming. Several large pueblos were constructed, and thousands of people lived in the area.

The 100-room Wupatki pueblo had a ceremonial ballcourt inspired by the Hohokam culture from what is now the Phoenix area and a community “room” which looked a lot like a great kiva. Around 1250 they abandoned the pueblos and moved on. The visitor center has wonderful displays about the Ancestral Puebloans, the more



recent Navajo culture that moved into the area in the 1,800's, and the relationships between the Park Service and local Navajo families. These were contentious times, as the Park Service was tasked to move Navajo families off their ancestral lands to make room for the Monument. We continued along the loop drive through Sunset Crater National Monument to the O'Leary group campsite on the Coconino National Forest. Our group of seven spread out in the well-designed group site that would accommodate 50.

On Monday morning we headed to Walnut Canyon National Monument. Scattered families lived on the

canyon rims for centuries, but during the 1100's after the Sunset Crater eruption, many moved into the canyon, building numerous cliff dwellings in the limestone alcoves below the canyon rim. Archaeologists have labeled this culture “Sinagua” for a Spanish term meaning “mountains without water”. They thrived here for about 150 years and moved on about the same time other villages in the region were vacated at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

We continued into Flagstaff where we met at the turn-of-the-century, duplex-style Riordan Mansion for a picnic lunch and guided tour. Designed by Charles Whittlesey, architect of the impressive El Tovar Hotel at the Grand Canyon, the mansion is a fine example of American Arts and Crafts-style architecture, interior design, and landscape design. It was built by the Riordan brothers in 1904 with the latest technology, featuring indoor plumbing, electric lights, and central heat. The brothers owned the successful Arizona Timber and Logging Company, Flagstaff's largest employer, and they married the Metz sisters. The mansion consists of two separate homes connected by a common area known as the billiard room. One of the homes looks essentially as it did in 1904, showcasing original family belongings and fine examples of early Stickley furniture. The other home is maintained as a museum with informative displays and photos of the period.

Then we spent a couple of hours at the Museum of Northern Arizona spending most of our time in the Native Peoples of the Colorado Plateau exhibition. This newly-renovated, permanent exhibition displays the story of ten Colorado Plateau tribes: Zuni, Acoma, Southern Ute, Southern Paiute, Hopi, Havasupai, Hualapai, Yavapai and Dilzhe'e Apache, and Diné (Navajo).

Through over 350 objects selected by 42 tribal consultants, this exhibition reflects tribal histories, values, and cultures. We returned to our group campsite and enjoyed another beautiful evening.



On Tuesday morning we packed up and headed to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon for a guided tour of the Tusayan Pueblo, to visit the Tusayan Museum, and to visit the Desert View Watchtower. Both the museum



and watchtower were classic works designed by renowned American architect Mary Colter, an employee of the [Fred Harvey Company](#) who also created and designed many other buildings in the Grand Canyon vicinity including Hopi House, [Hermit's Rest](#), and [Lookout Studio](#). Our NPS guide Grace Lilly was informative and enthusiastic. The 800-year-old Tusayan Pueblo consists of a small, u-shaped pueblo featuring a living area, storage rooms, a large kiva, and a large plaza. Nearby farming areas utilized check dams to catch rainfall. Tree ring analysis indicates that the site was built around 1185 and occupied for about twenty years. It represents the survival of an isolated Pueblo II culture in the Pueblo III era.

Our last stop was to visit the historic Desert View Watchtower, also designed by [architect Mary Colter](#). Colter designed the four-story watchtower to resemble towers found at Ancestral Puebloan sites in the Southwest, but its size dwarfs any known Puebloan-built tower. The closest prototypes for such a structure may be found at [Hovenweep National Monument](#). The structure, completed in 1932, is composed of a circular coursed masonry tower rising from a rubble base. The base was intentionally designed to convey a partly ruinous appearance, perhaps of an older structure on which the watchtower was later built. (Wikipedia)



The interior contains murals by [Fred Kabotie, a celebrated Hopi painter, silversmith, illustrator, potter, author, curator and educator; and petroglyph-style decorations by Fred Greer](#). One enters the structure through the large Kiva room, designed to resemble a kiva. The ceiling is roofed with logs salvaged from the Grandview Hotel in the same manner as roofs in kivas are built. Huge windows face the canyon and a large fireplace takes up one wall. A gift shop and NPS information kiosk are also inside. Circular staircases take visitors to the upper floors, including a viewing deck on the roof of the Kiva room. This is a wonderful site not to be missed.

After a picnic lunch we parted ways with some of the group staying longer at the Grand Canyon and others heading to other sites in the area.

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– by Lyle hancock

