

# SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



## FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **October 24 - 28, 2012**

Destination: **Little Colorado National Heritage Area**

Leader: **Richard Robinson**

Number of Participants: **7**

Seven members of SJBAS traveled on Oct. 24-28, 2012 to this area. If the area is viewed only from a car along I-40, travelers miss fascinating countryside with stark contrasts. The Chinle formation, 225 million years old, presents various shades of red, purple, blue, green, gray and white. Great distances can be viewed. This 26,000-square-mile area has been occupied by humans for 13,000 years, with many groups coming and going, who have left stories of their crafts, life survival, and culture. Many believe that the Kachina religion practiced by the Hopi and Zuni people started along the Little Colorado River.

With only a few days for the field trip, we made several short jaunts from I-40 to view the area along the Little Colorado River drainage. On our first day, some people stopped at a trading post with high caliber Navajo and Hopi crafts. Amazingly, 24 of the 50 early trading posts on the south-ern Navajo Reservation were owned or operated by Hubbard, not just one.

After settling into our Holbrook motel, some of us sought to visit the Holbrook petroglyph panel near the golf course, only to find a new locked gate. So we headed south along the Old Woodruff Road looking for petroglyph sites, but darkness came on quickly. We did drive through Woodruff, a community settled in 1876 by the Latter-Day Saints led by Nathan Tenney. As we continued south, we came to a bridge and impressive rock dam that may have diverted water to a wooden flume system that followed the Little Colorado River and supplied water to large agricultural areas. The rock supports and walls for the flume can still be viewed at many locations, often seen as archaeological ruins. Cotton was an important crop for the Hopi and their ancestors until the 1900s.

Next, we spent a day at Petrified Forest National Park, with knowledgeable Chief Archaeologist Bill Reitze. The Park, well known for its "hardwood forests," is less appreciated for its several hundred archaeological sites and petroglyphs. We traveled to a portion of the newly acquired Park lands and viewed several petroglyph sites, including a petroglyph of a "hunting kill site." We found some beautiful B/W sherds, which looked Chacoan but could also have been from Hopi, Kayenta, Zuni, Snow Flake or several other areas.

After lunch along the almost dry Little Colorado River, we walked below the rim of the Puerco Pueblo, an area restricted to those with a Park Ranger, to see petroglyphs which can't be seen from above, including several of Kachina. We walked through the Puerco Pueblo site, one of two large pueblos at the end of the Pueblo period. In 1250 it had 100 rooms, three kivas, an enclosed plaza and a population of about 200. We learned about a potential threat to the Park and surrounding areas from a mining company, which hopes to extract potash (fertilizer). The following day we visited Homolovi State Park, occupied between 620 and 1400 AD. Seven large sites may have been occupied by Hopi ancestors

on their way to Black Mesa between 1260 and 1400 AD. We visited Homolovi II, with a rectangular great kiva, a fascinating feature of this 1200 room site occupied between 1330 and 1400 AD, with 40 kivas and three plazas. We were treated to an excellent pottery demonstration by Homolovi Park ranger Gwen Setalla, who told of harvesting her clay and the special treatments she uses to make her pots. She can tell the difference among clay sources by their taste. She had made and fired in sheep dung pottery of micaceous clay given to her by a member of the Santa Clara Pueblo. Her first try with this new clay was a resounding success and was given to a family member for her wedding the next day. Many of us purchased holiday presents.

We then toured Homolovi IV, access to which is restricted to those accompanied by a park ranger. It was built small and expanded to be impressive; having 150 rooms, and is built on several levels. It appears as steps down the south and east sides of a mesa, looking massive from a distance. It was occupied only from 1260 to 1290.

After staying one night in Winslow, Saturday morning we met our guide Gary Tso for a full day in the Land of the Hopi. He provided an extensive narration about being Hopi and the Hopi creation story, as he drove us to visit Walpi, Oraibi and the very special Awatovi site, which can be visited only with a guide. He provided his personal interpretation of the matrilineal system as it effects a single father following the death of his wife.

Walpi sits on a narrow strip of land 300 feet above the surrounding valley on First Mesa. It has been continuously occupied for 1100 years and still has no running water or electricity. The people here have an ancestral relationship with those at Betataken as indicated by a Fire Clan pictoglyph on the wall there and oral histories. Old Oraibi has been continuously occupied since 1150 AD, but disagreements between two chiefs caused many to leave the site in the early 1900s. Some who left settled in Moenkopi adjacent to Tuba City. In Oraibi we met a skilled elderly potter. Our tour of Awatovi was a special, as Gary is the steward for this 500-room site, which had a Spanish mission complex. It was encountered by Coronado's men in 1540. Awatovi's welcome of the Spanish during their reoccupation after the pueblo revolt was not acceptable to other Hopi villages. The location is of great significance to the Hopi people. We found some exquisite polychrome shards, some with incised markings. While many think of the Hopi as one people, but there are 12 independent villages and more than 32 clans.

On our way home, we viewed important petroglyphs at Willow Springs through a chain link fence, left by many clans to mark their passage. This site is very powerful to the Hopi people. We give thanks to Bill Reitze, Kenn Evans, Chad Meunier, Gwen Setalla, the management of the two parks, and Gary Tso for making our trip special.

- by Richard Robinson

Participants: Rich and Linda Robinson, Bob Powell, Janice Sheftel, Susan Whitfield, Gail and Marlo Schulz