

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **February 9 - 12, 2017**

Destination: **Exploring Cochise County, AZ**

Leaders: **Gail Schulz**

Number of Participants: **18**

- From Thursday, February 9th, through Sunday, February 12th, eighteen SJBAS members joined Gail and Marlo Schulz to explore Cochise County AZ. We met for dinner Thursday night to meet everyone and discuss trip plans. Friday February 10, we spent on Fort Huachuca, the army post located just west of Sierra Vista AZ in the Huachuca Mountains. Fort Huachuca was founded March 3, 1877 by Captain Samuel M. Whitside of the 6th U.S. Cavalry as a temporary tent camp. This location overlooked the San Pedro and the Santa Cruz valleys and provided timber, water, game and protection for the troops. The camp was less than a day's ride from Sonora Mexico. The location proved so beneficial that in the early 1880s Army officials succeeded in achieving permanent post status for the camp and permanent buildings were erected. In 1974 the original Camp Huachuca site was designated a National Historic Site and National Historic Landmark. The Old Post area has been maintained much as it was when the permanent camp was founded in the 1880s. Buildings surrounding the parade ground retain the exteriors from original construction between 1880 and 1905. Soldiers engaged in the Indian Wars with Cochise and Geronimo were stationed at Fort Huachuca. Every regiment of the Buffalo Soldiers was stationed at Fort Huachuca at some point throughout their many years of existence. The Post is known as the home of the Buffalo Soldiers. Today the Post is the center of U. S. military intelligence and unmanned aircraft.
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- We began our exploration of Fort Huachuca with Paul Pipik, Director of the Fort Huachuca Museums, in the new Military Intelligence Museum and Library. We viewed a very comprehensive video detailing the history and mission of the Post from the 1880s to the present. Paul then took us on a tour of the Military Intelligence Museum displays which begin with exhibits detailing the earliest types of intelligence gathering, analysis and use and end with exhibits explaining the current sophisticated methods of gathering and sharing intelligence in our present world. Paul brought the time period of each exhibit to life by telling us the stories of the individuals who were key to each conflict and the contributions they made to the success of our U.S. forces at home and around the world. Paul's love of the history of military intelligence was evident as he enthusiastically shared his great knowledge with us.
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- Off to our picnic lunch on Reservoir Hill overlooking the Post, the San Pedro and Santa Cruz valleys, and many of the Sky Island mountains in AZ and Sonora Mexico. The advantage of the view of the vast

sweep of land visible from the Post as discovered by Captain Whitside in 1877 was made abundantly clear from this vantage point. On the way to Reservoir Hill we visited the Buffalo Soldier Plaza to view an iconic bronze statue paying tribute to the Buffalo Soldier in his full uniform of the 1880s.

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- After lunch, we met Christopher DeMell at the main Fort Huachuca Museum for a discussion and question and answer period before we toured the museum. This museum is located on the parade ground in one of the original buildings on the Post that has served as a residence in the past. It offers an overview of the native civilizations in the area and progresses to a display of early cavalry equipment and dress. Part of the museum is dedicated to the Buffalo Soldiers and traces their history at the Post through photographs, gear and exhibits. The museum features many artifacts and much history from the early days of Arizona Territory and tells the story of the lives of the families on the Post. One interesting exhibit was spurs which reputedly had belonged to Poncho Villa, but no corroborating details accompanied them. After touring the main Museum, we crossed the street to the Museum Annex to view an exhibit of unmanned aircraft ranging from a battered survivor of over 50 missions from 1956 on up to the present very specialized, sometimes miniscule drones in use today. Interesting information accompanied each drone and a mock control panel an operator would use simulated what it would be like to control a drone strike.
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- Our last stop on the Post was a visit to the old Post Cemetery which was opened May 18, 1883. It was the second location for the Post Cemetery. The earliest burial at the first cemetery was in 1878. The history of Cochise County can be read in the tombstones of this cemetery. Many Indian Scouts and their families are buried there. One mass grave contains 76 unknowns brought from old Fort San Carlos in 1925 before the Coolidge Dam covered that cemetery. The unknowns are believed to have been killed in an Apache raid near the San Carlos reservation in the last quarter of the 19th century. In the early days of Arizona Territory, it was the custom to bring the bodies of anyone found in the desert to the nearest Army cemetery for burial. This resulted in many unknown pioneers buried in the Post Cemetery. Many infant and young child burials are present among the graves of military personnel and their families. The Post Cemetery records show 3,976 known dead and at least 98 unknown dead buried here since 1883. The cemetery is still in use for cremains. This is a beautiful, peaceful, tree-shaded cemetery encircled by a native stone wall.
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- On Saturday Feb 11 Becky Orozco, history professor at Cochise College, archaeologist, anthropologist and our good friend from many past trips, was our guide for the day. We started the day with breakfast at the famous Gadsden Hotel in Douglas AZ, and a talk from Becky about the history of the border, the conflicts, the importance of the crucial border crossing points still in use today and the tangled relationship governed by politics that we have shared with Mexico since the early 1800s. We learned about the beautiful Gadsden Hotel and the place it occupied in the history and settlement of Douglas. We viewed the beautiful Tiffany stained glass window that stretches across the front of the lobby and depicts desert scenery and plants. Then we drove the 15 miles east of Douglas to the John Slaughter Ranch. John Slaughter was the Cochise County sheriff from 1888 to 1892 who is credited with subduing the unruly element, outlaws then called "cowboys", who plied their trade in the border lands. The Slaughter Ranch was originally around 76,000 acres spanning the U.S. and Mexico border. Artesian springs made this an oasis in the desert that was used by prehistoric people and continued to be used all the way to the present. The ranch buildings, history and artifacts have been preserved and interpreted to offer a window into the lives of early residents of Arizona Territory. The ranch house preserves many family photographs which show the daily life of the Slaughter family, friends and employees.
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- On a lava outcropping above the Slaughter Ranch, the Army established one of 12 camps along the border to protect early border residents and prevent the Mexican Revolution from spilling over into Arizona Territory. Low stone walls that formed the base of tents for the troops remain as well as the low stone walls of a large horse corral and low stone walls ringing the hilltop camp. The lonely existence of these soldiers in their hilltop camp was brightened by proximity to the Slaughter ranch house and the people who came to visit the ranch.
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- We left the Slaughter Ranch and returned to Douglas to get an up-close look at the border fence on our way to Camp Naco. Several miles west of Douglas on Hwy 80 a road leads directly to the border fence and parallels it for some miles into Naco. We stopped on the road along the closest point of the border fence to view it. The wind was howling through the wire of the fence creating a sound like that of a Great Plains blizzard, haunting, sad, lonely, menacing. Just a bit further on we came to more solid welded metal pieces that form the fence near Naco. We certainly do not want to see a concrete wall in place of the fence already existing on the border.
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- Becky took us to Camp Naco, one of those 12 camps on the border established to protect Arizona territorial residents from the fighting in the Mexican Revolution. It is the only one of the camps still standing. Buildings are of adobe and covered with stucco. Buffalo Soldiers were stationed here. We viewed Camp Naco with Becky two years ago and were excited to see the progress that had been made in restoring and protecting the buildings. The quad between the buildings on the west side of the camp has been cleared of trees, brush, rubble and trash and has been transformed into an area where one can visualize the Buffalo Soldiers going about their daily routine. In fact, some filming has been done with the Buffalo Soldiers in this area of the camp for a documentary. Many options are under consideration for Camp Naco and work is completed as grants and other funding is secured. It is an incredible piece of history from the days of the Mexican Revolution along the border that deserves to be protected and restored.
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- Sunday February 12, we visited the Amerind Museum just off I-10 in Texas Canyon east of Benson AZ. The Amerind was hosting a Mata Ortiz Pottery Show and Sale and a Zapotecan rug weaver. The pottery featured was outstanding and showcased a new young artist whose style we had not seen before. He created pots etched with intricate Dia de los Muertos scenes and fired them in red or black. We could watch his meticulous work on his next piece. They were exquisite. We attended a presentation by the Zapotecan weaver who was a master of his craft. His family is one of the few still using all natural dyes and all wool threads in their rugs. He showed video of his family and the minerals, plants and insects they use to create the rich, intensely saturated dyes. He showed his mother spinning the wool into long threads using a spinning wheel that she stands beside to use. He spoke of his efforts to educate other dyers and weavers in his village to the dangers of using the chemical dyes and allowing the dyes to pollute streams and lands the village must rely upon to live. Nearly all the rugs offered for sale in the Southwest are made using these harmful chemical dyes. Prices for his beautiful rugs were roughly comparable to Navajo rugs of the same size. When we win the lottery....
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- The Amerind is dedicated to the Native cultures of the Americas and features exhibits of fine artifacts from a great number of these cultures. Charles di Peso who excavated Casas Grandes in Chihuahua MX was the head archaeologist at the private Amerind Foundation for many years. One room is dedicated to his work there and also features collections from his excavations at Texas Canyon and Presidio de Terrenate on the banks of the San Pedro River near Fairbank AZ. Upstairs a large room features more recent Native American artifacts. A changing exhibit featured Native games. Mata Ortiz, Casas Grandes and Pueblo pottery are on display in other galleries. A separate building holds the art gallery which features permanent and changing exhibits. The most recently installed exhibit was photographs of the

people, scenery and life style of residents of Canyon de Chelly. Other rooms of the art gallery tell the life story of William Shirley Fulton and his wife Rose who founded the Amerind.

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- As wind and raindrops moved in we moved on in a circle to return to Sierra Vista through the Sulphur Springs Valley. We drove part of the Ghost Town Trail through the mining district between Pearce and Gleeson AZ. We located Soldier's Hole in the valley near Elfrida AZ and stopped to read about the artesian water source that sustained life for the soldiers in 1861 to 1886 when they camped near the springs during the Indian Wars. Soon after leaving this roadside monument a large tan, gold and gray animal streaked across the road in front of us. It was not a dog and was far too large to be a coyote. We concluded it was a Mexican Grey Wolf from the wolves reintroduced to this area of Arizona and New Mexico. As we drove we saw large flocks of Sandhill cranes returning to Whitewater Draw for the night. We spent quite some time at Whitewater Draw watching the many thousands of cranes residing there for the winter. We saw so many flocks come in and land that we wondered if there was room for them all. We said our goodbyes there and returned to our homes or hotels with many memories of the magic and wonder of Cochise County Arizona.