

San Juan Basin Archaeological Society



Field Trip Report

Destination: Hopi Land, Rock Art Ranch, Petrified Forest National Park Date: May 17 – 19, 2019

Leader(s): Rusty Chamberlain Number of Participants: 14

Fourteen SJBAS members had a wonderful visit to Hopi Lands. The weather was terrific, that is windy and wild. We all travelled to Winslow on our own, arriving on Thursday afternoon or evening. The wind negated our traditional campfire at the Homolovi State Park Campground.

Friday morning the group gathered at the Best Western. Here is the group, Paula Lutz and Louise Powers-Ackley, Rusty and Kathy Chamberlain, Linda and Pete Groth, Michelle and Mark McKibben, Holly Hagan and Barry Spear, Lyle and Barb Hancock, and Hunter and Loraine McCleary. At about 9:00 A.M. we caravanned to Rock Art Ranch. While this is a working ranch, it has prehistoric ancestral Puebloan sites, historic Navajo sites and a canyon with flowing water that contains over three thousand petroglyphs. We were met at the ranch's museum by Brantley Baird, the rancher, his granddaughter, Torrie and their dogs. Outside the museum is a petrified wood and desert plant garden and a display of farm tools and old cars. Inside the big barn, they have displays of artifacts from prehistory to pioneer times up to today. The first thing Brantley showed us were two rooms of artifacts that have been found on the ranch including complete Anasazi pots, arrowheads, including a Clovis point, and old firearms.

From the ranch museum, Torrie led us to an ancestral Puebloan room block that had been recently excavated by the University of Arizona field school and then to a historic Navajo site with a female Hogan, a male Hogan, and a sweat lodge. On the way to the canyon, Torrie stopped to show us the first of the petroglyphs, a map etched onto a large sandstone slab in the middle of a wash that leads to the water source in Chevelon Canyon.



But the big deal of this day was the actual canyon. Following a quick lunch overlooking a bend of Chevelon Canyon, we climbed down into the canyon. It was so fantastic I am almost lost for words. Torrie made sure we all saw the first panel on the left up the canyon; the "birthing scene" is the prominent feature. From here, we crossed the stream to see the petroglyphs on the west wall. Torrie told us about an unusual glyph in a

protected area at the bend on the river, “The Cinderella”. Sure enough, she does look like a Cinderella.

We left Rock Art Ranch a little after 2:00 P.M. the plan was to meet at Homolovi State Park to visit 2 of the 4 ruins. The park now closes at 5:00 P.M. so we only had time to visit one of the towns. Although there have been earlier periods of occupation, Homol’ovi (the Hopi spelling) was a Hopi town from about 1260 to 1400. Hopi still return for ceremonies and to gather plants. It would have been nice to linger at the village but, boy, was it windy.

We had 7:15 dinner reservations at The Turquoise Room in La Posada, a historic Fred Harvey hotel designed by Mary Colter, so we all returned to camp or hotel to freshen up and rest. We gathered at the bar at La Posada around 6:30 drinks. The bar was full, so Barb led us into the game room to gather and tell stories before dinner. It was like a campfire but without the fire or the wind. Everyone enjoyed the food and fellowship. I will also say, the Turquoise Room has some interesting-looking vegetarian dishes.

Saturday was Hopi day. We met our guide, Micha Lomo’omvaya, at the Hopi Cultural Center on Second Mesa. The Cultural Center has several jewelry/gift shops, a museum and a restaurant. Micha joined us just after 8:30. After introductions and a brief overview of the agenda, we drove to Third Mesa to see the Dawa or Taawaki Canyon petroglyphs. The 200-foot high cliffs at the site form a horseshoe-shaped cove. The cliff wall extends for over a mile. Micah shared the Hopi purpose or interpretation of the petroglyphs. Quite fascinating. Micah also pointed out some of the local plants and how they are used. Juniper ashes are mixed with blue corn flour to make the traditional Hopi piki bread.

From Dawa Park, we went to old Oraibi village (photographs were prohibited), also on Third Mesa and parked by a shop. The shop has a display of historic photographs and, of course, jewelry and other crafts. It also sold Hopi piki bread. I bought some to share with the group. While we rested in the shade, Micah explained several building styles from the original ancient buildings to more modern stone construction to modern cinder block houses. As we walked farther into the older part of the village, we could see the foundations of ancient walls everywhere. In the plaza Micah pointed out the ruins of the older part of the village that was abandoned when the village split between the Traditionalists and the Progressives in 1906. The Progressives were kicked out. Since the houses still belonged to the Progressives who left, they have not been occupied or maintained. The Progressive families still live on Third Mesa but in other villages.



After a brief break at the Cultural Center, Micah took us to his mother’s home where he further discussed Hopi life with a table full of Hopi cultural items. We also saw a film showing how piki bread is prepared. You can see several films on the subject on the Internet, just search for “making piki bread”.

Sunday was Petrified Forest National park day. We met at the Rainbow Forest Museum and Visitor Center at the south entrance. The museum is dedicated to the Triassic Period which is when the park's fossils were alive. Because of the wind and cool weather some of the group left for home early. From the museum, several of us walked the Petrified Log trail behind the museum and the rest hiked up to Agate House an ancestral Puebloan room block made of petrified wood. There are hundreds of such sites in the area. Because of the wind we decided that each couple would tour the other features in the park on our own and head home.

- by Rusty Chamberlain

