

The Uncompahgre Journal

June 2020

CHIPETA CHAPTER OF THE COLORADO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 37 Issue 6

Mark Your Calendar

Jun 12: Field trip to Big Tree grooved rock petroglyph site (*below, p. 4*). Watch for an email announcement.



June Viewing Possibilities

For those of you who are missing your monthly archaeology lecture, here are some suggestions to help you get by

From the Utah State Preservation Office:

“What is Fremont? Part 1,” about 13 minutes long.

<https://www.facebook.com/UtahSHPO/videos/1113230475726638/>



From the Archaeology Southwest YouTube channel

For a more detailed account of the Fremont, here is a talk by James Allison of BYU, about 50 minutes long.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_m5aWGNjwo.

There's also a video of Peter Pilles talking about the so-called Sinagua cultural area around Flagstaff and the Verde Valley, Arizona. No images, but a very interesting talk, just over 50 minutes long.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXkSG2K6boc>





by Bill Harris

Looking Back

This year I am observing my 36th year as a member of the Chipeta Chapter. In retrospect, it seems like it has flown by. The best part has been rubbing elbows with so many great people while hanging out in the boonies. Occasionally, someone will ask me what my favorite experience was while exploring western Colorado's back country.

Without hesitation my answer was the work the chapter did at the Harris Site. The chapter worked on 3 distinct projects at the site. The initial work headed up by archaeologist Gordy Tucker in 1984-85 introduced me to the hands-on science of archaeology. The Bureau of Land Management's "The Harris Site Excavation" Cultural Series No. 28 publication, authored by Gordy, details the chapter's work on the site.

The chapter returned to the site in 1989 to conduct emergency fieldwork to record several fire hearths exposed by a flashflood earlier that summer. Charcoal samples were collected and analyzed, providing a broader time frame for the site's habitation. The results of the chapter's work was published in *Southwestern Lore* in the Fall, 2016, "Flashflood Mitigation at The Harris Site (5MN2341)".

A third project was organized in 1990, overseen by archaeologists Jon Horn and Rich Fike. Archaeologist Rand Gruebel provided additional professional expertise. The chapter did an in-depth examination of the historic component of the Harris Site. A report, "Archaeological Investigations of the Historic Ute Component at the Harris Site (5MN2341)", detailed the findings of the field work. The discovery of the "top hat man" petroglyph near the site provided added insight into the site's importance.

Another project that is near and dear to my heart is the "Stinking Desert Cairns Project". Chapter members on and off roamed the landscape known as the "Stinking Desert", northwest of Delta for several

years noting, then recording the rock cairns that were scattered across that landscape. An article in *South-*

western Lore, Winter, 2013 covers the scope of the project and shed light on the origins of the cairns. The cairns were, for the most part, the work of sheepherders who had roamed the valleys and pediments of the Stinking Desert since the early 1900's.

In the next installment I'll talk more about other projects that I really enjoyed, that took me a little further afield. No names will be mentioned to protect the guilty. Guilty of what, I'm not sure.



President's Corner

by Sally Johnson

Photo by Sally Johnson

I hope everyone is getting outside either gardening, doing chores, or just walking. I have been on several of the flash field trips and have met many new members. Of course, I have also touched base with the others that normally do the field trips. It is always great to put a name and face together and catch up on everyone's adventures during this time. I am also amazed at the diversity of our membership and the kindness that is shown for our wonderful resources.

If you are a site steward please check on your site at least once or twice this year, if possible. I have heard that there have been many sites vandalized in Utah, and the main building of the History Colorado Museum had been badly affected by broken windows and tagging this past week.

On a good note, I hope you have accessed the resources from History Colorado, such as their podcasts, talks, or the Colorado Experience series. It is amazing how much history we have in the state. We are still on hold for the summer picnic, but we have held board meetings via email. Those minutes will be sent out soon. I hope to see everyone soon, or at least by fall. Please let me know if you would like to have a trip to your special place or site, and I will pass on the word.

Sally



The Squint and Juanita Moore Scholarship

We'd like to congratulate this year's recipient:

Ty Cary

Ty is a Montrose High graduate, working on a Master's Degree at Oxford.

Created in honor of Chipeta Chapter founding member Carlyle "Squint" Moore and his wife, the scholarship is awarded each year to a deserving high school senior or college student intending to enroll or already enrolled in an Anthropology or Archaeology program.

The scholarship is managed by the Montrose Community Foundation. If you wish to donate, please send your tax deductible donations to the Montrose Community Foundation, PO Box 3020, Montrose, CO 81402.

Field Trips to be Announced

By Leigh Ann Hunt

There will be a field trip to the Big Tree grooved rock petroglyph site on the north end of the Uncompahgre Plateau on Friday, June 12, with Leigh Ann Hunt and George Decker.

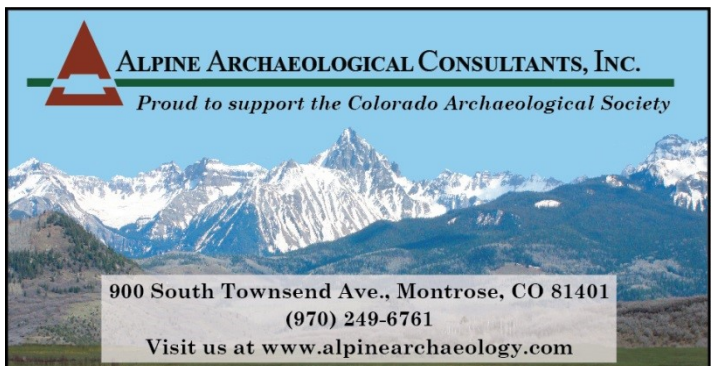
There will be a hike to Monarch Game Drives in July or August.

There may be a 4x4 trip to Fort Peabody, the snipers lookout at Imogene Pass during Telluride mine labor struggles, in July, roads and virus permitting.

Watch your email for announcements about these and other potential trips.



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From the Editor

There's a new radiocarbon calibration curve coming out. Everybody's pretty excited by it, I gather. It's been seven years since the last one and a considerable amount of new data promise to fix or ameliorate issues with the old curve. It'll never be perfect of course. We're dealing with things that happened a long time ago, after all. But every few years, we get a little more accurate about saying what happened when.

Why do we need a calibration curve? Radiocarbon dating works because all living things inhale or eat carbon. A small portion of all the carbon is radioactive C-14, which decays with a half-life of about 5,730 years. While living, organisms are more or less in equilibrium with the environment. When they die, the C-14 in their remains is not replaced anymore, so you can figure out when something died by measuring the amount of C-14 that's left in a given quantity of tissue. The technique assumes that the proportion of C-14 to C-12 in the atmosphere never changes—but in fact it does, and that's why calibration is so important. Radiocarbon dating labs are numerous; small bits of organic materials are common on archaeological sites; and analyses are reasonably affordable. Making it as accurate as possible just makes sense.

I remember in the late 1990s becoming aware that I had to shift my understanding of the age of things. Clovis changed from being 11,250 years old to being about 13,000 calibrated years old. A whole new set of terms had to be developed for

publications in order to make it clear where the dates came from and how they were arrived at. Apples needed to be compared only to apples. Calibration practically became a whole new discipline. In the last 20 years, the work of dating specialists has provided a series of widely accepted calibration curves that allow prehistorians to all speak the same language with each other.

Calibration doesn't solve all problems, however. One issue tied to increasingly accurate carbon dating is the frequency of so-called radiocarbon plateaus at critical times in prehistory: the Clovis period in North America, Hallstatt in Europe, and the Maya collapse in the Yucatan are only three among many others. Stratigraphy tells us that deeper layers of sediment are going to be older than shallower layers, yet radiocarbon dates don't always reflect that expectation. Plateaus are periods of time when stratigraphically deeper materials may produce later radiocarbon dates than materials from more recent strata, presumably because of local or global fluctuations in the ratio of C-14 to C-12 in the ancient atmosphere. Such plateaus really gum up efforts to create detailed chronologies of technological change in a one or two-century time period.

The new calibration is based on nearly 13,000 data points correlating radiocarbon with dates from other techniques, starting with tree-ring data that extend back 13,910 years. A wide variety of other techniques contribute, including Greenland ice cores with annual ice layer buildup, annual deposition of sediment in lake bottoms, speleothems (stalactites and stalagmites), potassium-argon, uranium-thorium, thermal and optical luminescence, and others. Notable for the new calibration curve is a stalagmite sequence from a cave in China that extends back 54,000 years, which will help push the new age limit for C-14 dating to 55,000 years, compared to the previous maximum date of around 50,000 years.

Nicola Jones

2020 "Carbon dating, the archaeological workhorse, is getting a major reboot." *Nature News*, 19 May, 2020. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01499-y>, accessed 5/31/2020.



Chipeta Chapter
Colorado Archaeological Society
P.O. Box 593
Montrose, Colorado 81402



Membership Application

Date: _____

Name: _____

Street or RR Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

(email required to receive Chipeta & CAS newsletters & field trip info)

Check One:

☐ New

☐ Renewal

Annual Dues* (includes state CAS dues): Check one

☐ Family (2 or more members same household)\$40

☐ Individual\$35

☐ Student (Circle if Individual or Family).....\$25

☐ Senior/Disabled** (Circle if Individual or Family).....\$25

☐ Secondary (Circle one) Individual (\$10) or Family (\$15)

☐ Opt out of printed **Southwest Lore**

Photos by Dennis DeVore



***Southwest Lore** is the journal of the Colorado Archaeological Society: print copies are mailed quarterly to all members except seniors, who receive electronic (PDF) copies.

****Senior** is any person who is at least 65 years of age; **Disabled** is any person who is permanently disabled.



Code of Ethics

As a member of the Colorado Archaeological Society, I pledge to:

- Uphold local, state, and federal antiquities laws.
- Respect the property rights of landowners.
- Report vandalism to appropriate authorities.
- Support only scientifically and legally conducted archaeological activities.
- Conduct field and/or laboratory activities using professionally accepted standards.
- Not condone the sale, exchange, or purchase of artifacts obtained from illegal activities.
- Be sensitive to the cultural histories and spiritual practices of groups that are the subject of archaeological investigation.
- Accept the responsibility, if serving as principal investigator, to publish the results and make the collection available for further study.

Signature: _____ Other Family Signature: _____

Make checks payable to "Colorado Archaeological Society" and mail the signed application to:

Chipeta Chapter
P.O. Box 593, Montrose, CO 81401

CHIPETA CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS

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CHIPETA CHAPTER WEBSITE

- <https://www.chipetachaptercas.org>

Want More?

Archaeology Southwest is a great link to find out about current issues and events relating to Southwest Archaeology.

Field Trip Committee

Leigh Ann Hunt, Joe Oglesby, and George Decker

Masthead photo courtesy of Carol Patterson. All other unattributed photos are by the editor.