

The Uncompahgre Journal

February 2023 CHIPETA CHAPTER OF THE COLORADO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY Volume 40 Issue 2

Mark Your Calendar

Feb 1: [Montrose Historical Society](#) monthly meeting with Jeff Eichhorn on the history of Montrose County's Producers Coop. Montrose County Event Center, Rms. 1 and 2, 7:00 pm.

Feb 8: [San Juan Basin Archaeological Society](#) monthly meeting with Dr. Andrew Gulliford on "Bears Ears: a landscape of Refuge and Resistance." Lyceum, Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College, 7:00 pm. This meeting will be available on Zoom.

Feb 15: [Chipeta Chapter](#) monthly meeting with Rory Tyler on Moab's ancient astronomers (*right*). United Methodist Church, Park Avenue and S 1st Street, 7:00 pm.

Mar 9-12: Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists [Annual Meeting](#) (click the hyperlink, then download the Winter 2023 newsletter for more information). Wright Opera House, Ouray, CO, March 9-12, 2023.

Our February Presentation

Moab's Ancient Astronomers

For nearly thirty years, Rory Tyler has been examining rock art in the Moab area for astronomical markers such as equinoxes and solstices, and finding them. This talk is an in-depth look at four of those sites, including the Solstice Snake, which he decoded in 1997. These sites are mostly of Basketmaker provenance but there are some Archaic markers as well. Rory hopes to draw more attention to the Basketmaker culture and to introduce some new interpretive tools he has developed for those interested in finding astronomical sites on their own.



Photo courtesy of Rory Tyler



Our February Speaker: Rory Tyler

Rory Tyler is from Wisconsin where he grew up visiting Indian effigy mounds. He moved to Oregon in 1971 and spent 15 years there. In January 1977 he visited Chaco Canyon, hiking on Fajada Butte five months before Anna Sofaer discovered the Sun Dagger there, which piqued his interest in ancient astronomy.

In 1993 he moved to Moab, Utah and began visiting rock art sites as part of his normal hiking regime. In March 1994 he went with two friends to a giant snake petroglyph in the Behind the Rocks Wilderness to see if it was an equinox marker. It wasn't. But, on his subsequent 200+ site visits he identified other astronomical markers there and, in the summer of 1997

identified the Snake as a solstice site. Over 100 people a year now take the long, hot hike to see the Solstice Snake every summer.

In nearly 30 years of observation, he has identified three other major astronomical sites in the Moab area and several minor sites. They are mostly of Basket-maker provenance though there is some Archaic astronomy, too. In his presentation Rory examines these sites in detail, introducing some original techniques for identifying astronomical markers at these rock art panels and ancient native structures. He is still discovering new astronomical markers and has begun to train a cadre of Moab locals in this activity. Rory is also a cowboy poet.



President's Corner

by Sally Johnson

Photo by Sally Johnson

Not much to report until the weather starts warming up, but if you would like to request a field trip to a certain area please let us know. I would also like to welcome the new members to a great group. Thank you all again for all the great support and I'm looking forward to getting out and about on some trips.

The board would like to announce that we are staying on as officers for another year. The board is also looking into some new changes with the Moore scholarship; if you are interested please contact one of the board members for more information.

If I have not reported before there are no PAAC classes being offered at this time. There is no lead person at the moment and the program is going through new changes. Hopefully, I will know more in the future.

The Squint and Juanita Moore Scholarship

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. Students can apply online at collegeXpress—and note that the deadline is April 1.

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. Please put "Moore Scholarship" in the memo line.

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Submissions for publication

may be emailed to:

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From the Editor

What's in a headline? Oregon State University researcher Loren Davis has published a report on excavations at the Cooper's Ferry site along the Salmon River in Idaho, which boasts some early dates associated with projectile points. Here are three of the headlines I read about this excavation. 1) "Deadly sharp points found in Idaho could be first American-made tools." 2) "What This Fearsome Weapon Reveals About Early Americans." 3) "Oregon State archaeologists uncover oldest known projectile points in the Americas." Headline #3, from the OSU publicity department is the most restrained, though still engaging in some hyperbole. The first headline could be a promo for good old American know-how and the second sounds like a gossip magazine about to expose somebody for some egregious misdeed or other. The headline of the actual research article published in *Science Advances* is much more prosaic (see Davis et al. reference below).

I understand that headlines are designed to catch the eye and attract readers, but it's still amusing to compare their breathless excitement to the dry information provided in the actual research report. And it's not just the headlines. Not all of the articles seized on the same things, but each has something that irritates me.

"Oldest known points, first American tools:" The actual research article mentions similar points found at the Gault and Friedkin sites in Texas that dated to circa 16,000 and 15,500 years ago. This means that the Idaho points are *among* the oldest points found on this continent, but not the oldest. While Coloradans might not want to embrace Texas, we recognize that it is part of North America. Similarly, I object to the suggestion that these are the first tools made in the Americas: projectile points represent one type of tool, highly prized by archaeologists because they last forever, and the technology of manufacture and the design of the points makes them distinguishable and groupable. That is, we can use their design—style—to group them with other similarly designed points and begin to posit relationships between points in widely dispersed locations. But there are lots of tools that don't have those characteristics. Ground stone implements are

tools, as are flakes that have been knocked off a core and used to butcher an animal or process a yucca plant. Many tools are made of perishable materials, and they certainly qualify as part of a tool kit. No society survives without tools. We are pretty sure that humans were on this continent long before 16,000 years ago: we have a well-dated 22,000-year-old series of footprints at White Sands in New Mexico, and possibly a 35,000-year-old mammoth kill in northern New Mexico. Those people used tools, as sure as Carter made little liver pills.

"Deadly sharp points, fearsome weapons:" Yes, they were deadly enough to dispatch large game. I have to imagine a press conference at which a bunch of science reporters asked Loren Davis questions and he felt compelled to go beyond the dry facts and wax enthusiastic about the effectiveness of his ancient points. I'm not criticizing: I'd have done the same thing. What's interesting is that the journalists turned that into a central part of the research.

Here's my take on the original article. The Cooper's Ferry site has 14 projectile points that date to somewhere between 16,000 and 15,250 years ago. That's why this site is important—that and the number of internally consistent C14 dates, the unambiguous stratigraphy, and the clear association of artifacts to dated materials. The critical information to be conveyed is that this is very strong evidence of established human presence on this continent some 2500 years before the makers of Clovis points. An associated but less secure argument is that the technology of the points is most similar to people who lived in northern Japan (Hokkaido) between 20,000 and 16,000 years ago. This is an important site, and apparently very well excavated. It is the latest in a string of publications that are pushing back the arrival time of humans into the Americas, and the hypothesis of a relationship between the Cooper's Ferry site and the Hokkaido technologies is worth following up. Why then do we need to over-sensationalize a sensational archaeological site?

References

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Chipeta Chapter
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Membership Application

Date: _____

Name: _____

Street or RR Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

(email required to receive Chipeta Chapter 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

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

☐ Opt out of printed *Southwest Lore*

**Southwest Lore* is the journal of the Colorado Archaeological Society: print copies are mailed quarterly, and a .pdf is posted to Member365 for download.

Photos by Dennis DeVore



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
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- **Scholarship:** Jon Horn / Bill Harris / Fred Henderson, scholarships@chipetachaptercas.org

CHIPETA CHAPTER WEBSITE

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

TO JOIN OR RENEW:

- Go to the Chipeta Chapter website and follow the membership links.

Program for Avocational Archaeological Certification (PAAC)

PAAC courses have been suspended for an indefinite period, but here is the web site at History Colorado.

<https://www.historycolorado/paac-event-schedule>.

Future Speakers

March: tentatively Dr. Dudley Garner, W. Wyoming Community College, speaking about restoring a granary site.

April: Dr. Tim Riley from the Price museum.

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

For more information on upcoming field trips and to sign up, please contact the Field Trip Leader

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