



The Uncompahgre Journal

February 2026 CHIPETA CHAPTER OF THE COLORADO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY Volume 43 Issue 2

Mark Your Calendar

Feb 4: [Montrose Historical Society](#) monthly meeting with Bob Cox on Cow Creek coal mining. Pioneer Room of Friendship Hall, Montrose Fairgrounds, 7:00 pm.

Feb 11: [San Juan Basin Archaeological Society](#) monthly meeting, with Jakob Sedig on DNA and archaeology in NW Mexico and the US SW. Lyceum, Center of SW Studies, Fort Lewis College, Durango, 7:00 pm.

Feb 18: [Chipeta Chapter](#) monthly meeting with Jon Horn on the Old Spanish Trail ([right](#)). United Methodist Church, 19 S. Park Ave, Montrose, 7:00 pm.

Feb 25: [CAS-GJ](#) monthly meeting with Carol Patterson on images of clouds in SW rock art. Redlands United Methodist Church, 527 Village Way, GJ, 6:30 pm.

Our February Presentation

Recent Old Spanish Trail Research

by Jon Horn

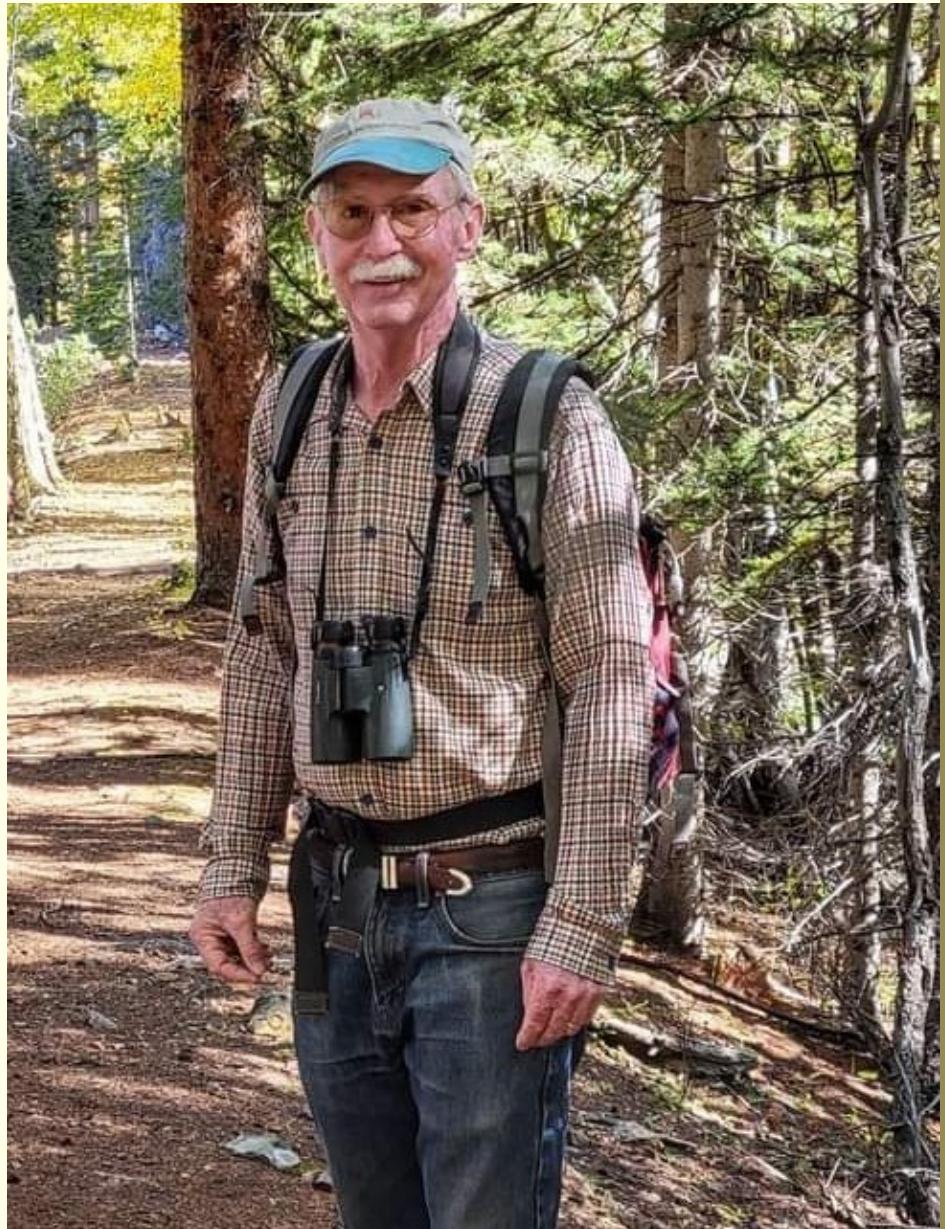
The Old Spanish Trail provided an important commercial linkage between New Mexico and California between 1829 and 1848 that has been recognized as the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. Recent research puts the trail into a larger context that encompasses a history of the entire southwest to provide a new period of significance for the trail of 1821-1881. This draws from American Indian use into prehistory (particularly that of the Ute), Spanish settlement of New Mexico, exploration and trade northward during the Spanish period, Mexican Independence in 1821 and the opening of the Santa Fe Trail, U.S. government exploration and military use, and regional settlement by Mormons and gold seekers. The expansion of the historic context for the trail is a result of preparation of a National Register nomination of the Fools Hill section of the trail northwest of Delta. Also to be discussed will be the difficulties in managing the historic landscape of the trail.



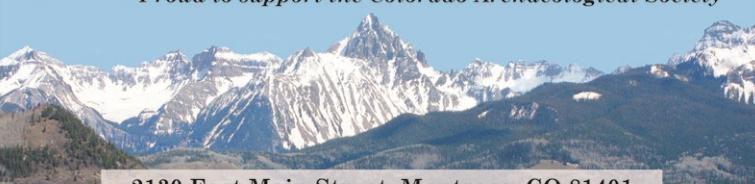
Our February Speaker

Jon Horn arrived in Montrose in 1984 to work for the cultural resource management firm of Nickens & Associates. He joined the Chipeta Chapter in 1985. In 1987, he was a founder of Alpine Archaeological Consultants and has worked in all of the western states except Nevada. Jon has a Bachelors degree in History from Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, and a Masters in Anthropology, focusing on historical archaeology, from the University of Idaho. He has written over 350 cultural resource management reports, 33 National Register of Historic Places nominations, including Multnomah Falls in Oregon and the Shavano Valley Rock Art Site, and 6 Historic American Engineering Record documents. He served on the Colorado Historic Preservation Review Board from 2015-2020, was named a Fellow of the Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists in 2017, and has been the chair of the City of Montrose Historic Preservation Commission since 2018.

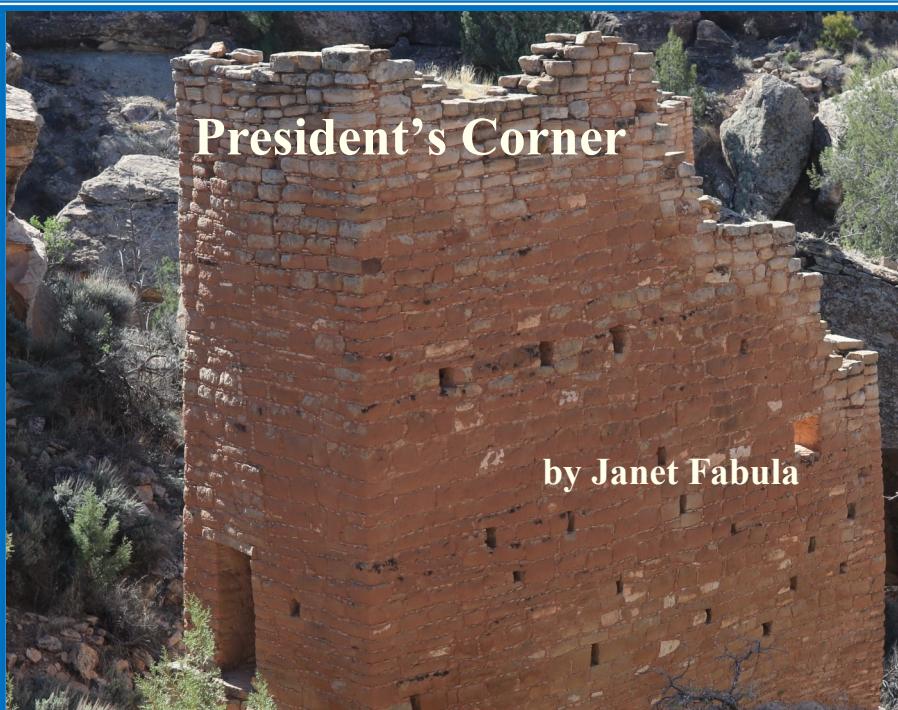
Jon's work on the Old Spanish Trail began on the BLM's National Historic Trails Project in Utah and Colorado in 2010. Since then, he has been involved in documenting additional sections of the trail and sites along the trail through Alpine and as a volunteer with other organizations. He is mostly retired now, but works on a few small projects for Alpine and continues his research on the Old Spanish Trail. When not doing those things, he enjoys time in the outdoors hiking and birdwatching, gardening, doing family genealogy, and traveling.



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President's Corner

by Janet Fabula

This time of the year is always full of optimism for me. This is when these clear blue Colorado days are so welcome and expansive. Not to mention that the days grow slowly longer. I am pretty sure there are more than a few of us who are getting out our gardening books and looking at seed catalogues and dreaming of this coming year's garden. Whether we actually *plant* a garden is another thing all together.

Along that happy avenue of thought - Our January speaker Zebulon Miracle inspired me and I had to get out my maps (and my magnifier). I had that pleasant time of dreaming, plotting and planning of adventures to come.

Upon looking back at some of the past issues of our newsletter, which goes back to 2009 by the way, I was impressed with the places we went and the things we saw. Perhaps some of you have a special field trip that you would like to repeat? After all, beauty and wonder has no limits on the times we can come back and see again. Therefore, I encourage us to think about past trips and contact our esteemed field trip committee with some of those special trips we would like to see again.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy these winter days as all within our view slumbers frozen and still.

Till our meeting in February,

Janet

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P.O. Box 593
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Submissions for publication may be emailed to:
Dave Batten, david.batten@enmu.edu



Museum of the West, GJ

by Leigh Ann Hunt

Eleven folks from the archaeological society joined the trip to the Museum of the West on January 29th to view the exhibit on trading post influences on Navajo rugs through time. It was a well-done exhibit with displays of superlative rugs from each rug weaving style, with an explanation of how and where the style originated. We also had time to visit the rest of the museum with its exhibits on the uranium boom, famous firearms of the area, and Native American artifacts.



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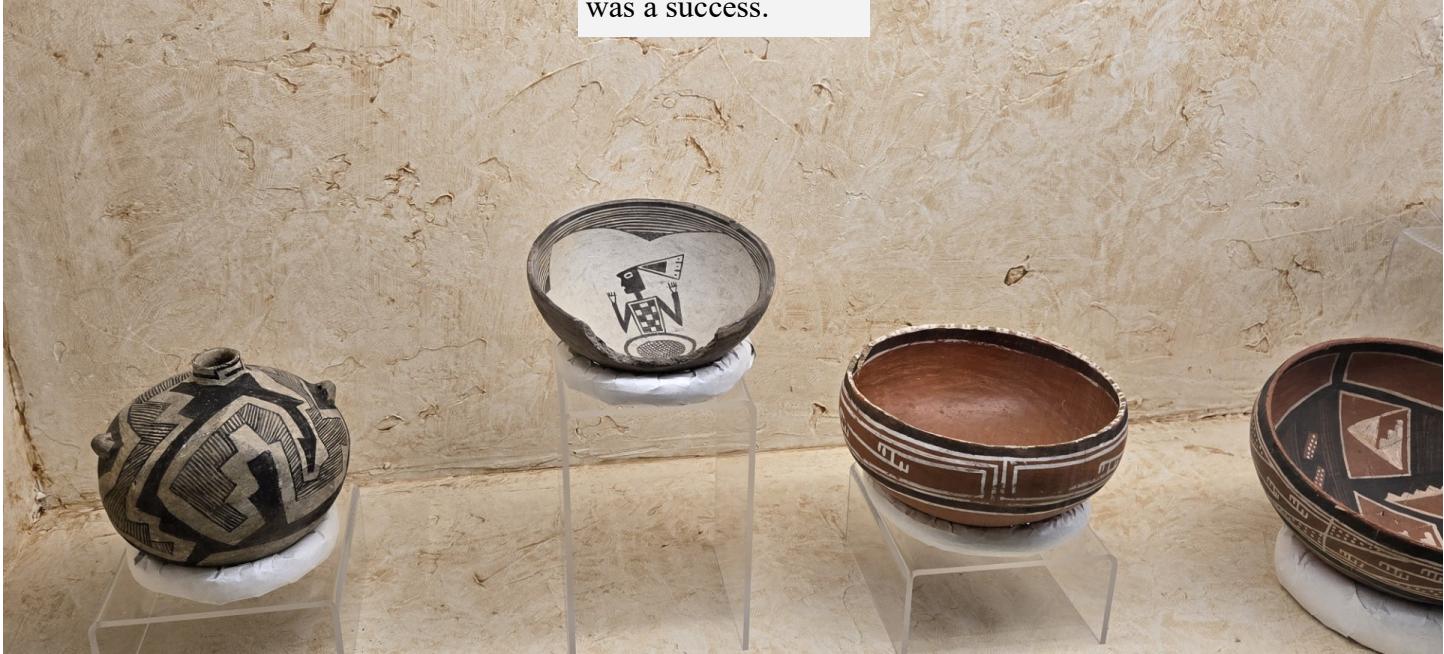


Then, while perusing the display on Southwest Native American pottery, we were amazed to come upon a particular Mogollon bowl that contains the original painted image that inspired the statewide CAS logo found today on all CAS materials. I do



not know the story of how the logo was selected for the Society some 75 years ago, but isn't it interesting to know that the source artifact is housed in Grand Junction?

After a pleasant dinner nearby on the tastefully lighted Main Street mall, everyone felt the trip was a success.



From the Editor

There is a widespread oral tradition among Native American groups from the Great Basin, including Paiute, Shoshone, and Wášiw (Washoe), concerning the acquisition of pine nuts. In January's *American Antiquity*, David Hurst Thomas and six co-authors, five of whom are Great Basin Natives, compare 61 variations of "Theft of Pine Nuts," or TPN, stories. They treat these stories not merely as evening diversions to keep their kids entertained, but as legitimate bits of oral history, accurately recording what life may have been like far into the past, though not without some need for judicious interpretation. The authors stress that native oral traditions should be evaluated as codified truths. Just because they weren't written down, doesn't mean they don't carry accurate information about the past, especially when many different versions of the story exist and carry the same main elements. The authors emphasize that "Indigenous tribal oral histories can indeed, at times, reflect eyewitness observations that potentially provide new insights into the deep past."

The gist of the tales is this: coyote, or wolf, or crow stole pine nuts from a place where they were common and took them back to their homeland where they were distributed—and grew—over the landscape. Thomas et al. take the historical value of these stories very seriously if carefully interpreted. Interestingly, a large portion of these tales suggest that the nuts were stolen from people to the north of the Great Basin, which seems to contradict the expectation of western science that pinyons retreated south to the Mojave desert during the ice ages, and moved back north into the Great Basin starting sometime after the Last Glacial Maximum (18,000 years ago). Even more interesting, a prominent theme of many of the TPN tales is of a huge, solid, and impenetrable wall of ice near the source of the stolen pine nuts.

Pinyon nuts were very important to native societies wherever they grew. There are some eight species of pinyon but the most important are *Pinus edulis* and *P. monophylla*. The nut crops are highly variable, with a good crop occurring every two to seven years. Still, in a good year, enough nuts could be harvested to keep a community in high quality food for a substantial amount of time. For the great basin populations, the pinyon nut played a similar role as the bison did in the

Great Plains: when the nut crops were good, there were frequent gatherings and celebrations, activities that encouraged social solidarity and networking, which also helped keep the gene pool sufficiently large.

Thomas et al. take away four main results from this study. First, the number and variety of Pine Nut stories emphasizes their importance as a food source. Second, their emphasis on sourcing pine nuts from areas to the north leads the authors to hypothesize two possibilities: a) additional, and more northern, refugia* of pinyon trees besides the Mojave desert, and b) the possibility of other related pine nuts being included with the pinyons (possibilities include limber, whitebark, ponderosa, or sugar pine). Third, the variety of tales contain details of animal biodiversity that extend the range of some species from their historic distributions. And finally, the ice barriers indicate a time depth in these stories that is hard to explain.

This was an interesting article with an interesting premise and an admirable goal of integrating oral histories with modern science, but I wasn't sure the authors achieved that goal. I came away from the article convinced that pinyon nuts were an important staple food in the Great Basin, but that was never in doubt. The ice barrier theme is very interesting, but also very hard to interpret, and doesn't really fit into the authors' hypothesis very well. The indications of greater animal diversity before the arrival of European Americans to the Great Basin are interesting, but not really quantifiable, and not at all surprising. The proposal of additional refugia for the pinyons during and after the Last Glacial Maximum may serve as a stimulus for additional study to confirm or reject, and that might be the most valuable result of this study. Finally, for those who have the time and inclination to go to the Supplemental Materials section, reading the 61 Theft of Pine Nuts tales should provide many hours of educational entertainment.

*a refugium is a location that supports an isolated or relict population of a once more widespread species

References

Thomas, David Hurst, Constance I. Millar, Misty Benner, Donna Cossette, Herman Fillmore, Diane L. Tee-man, and Wilson Wewa
2026 Theft of Pine Nuts: Pinyon Pine as a Survival Vehicle in the Great Basin (USA). *American Antiquity* 91, 207–228. [doi:10.1017/aaq.2025.10128](https://doi.org/10.1017/aaq.2025.10128)



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



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Date: _____

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Photos by Dennis DeVore

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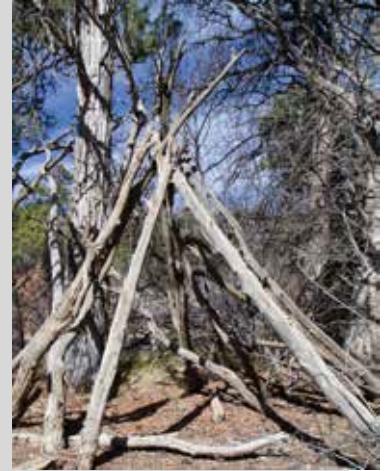
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Check One:

New
 Renewal

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	Family (2 or more members same household)	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student (Circle if Individual or Family)	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary (Circle one) Individual (\$10) or Family... (\$15)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Opt out of printed <i>Southwest Lore</i>	



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: _____

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

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For information, visit:

<https://www.historycolorado/paac>

PAAC Contacts

Sarah A. Allaun

Assistant State Archaeologist
sarah.allaun@state.co.us
303-866-5746

Leigh Ann Hunt

Chipeta Chapter PAAC Coordinator
vp@chipetachaptercas.org

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

Field Trip Committee

Leigh Ann Hunt, Joe Oglesby, and George Decker

Masthead photo courtesy of Bill Harris. All other unattributed photos are by the editor.