

# Preservation Archaeology NEWS

Building a Preservation Archaeology Network across the Greater Southwest

Fall 2009

## Viewpoint

### The Mule Creek Archaeological Testing Project

*Center Preservation Fellow and Field Supervisor Rob Jones compiled this report on our recent fieldwork in Mule Creek, New Mexico.*

This past June, the Center returned to southwestern New Mexico for our second season of fieldwork in partnership with **Hendrix College** and several local landowners. **Brett Hill**, Field Director and Hendrix College Professor, brought seven students to Mule Creek, where we were graciously accommodated on **Susan and Alex Jerome's** ranch.

This year, we focused on two previously undocumented sites, **Gamalstad** and **Fornholt**. Both include occupations that date after the relatively well-known Mimbres Classic period (A.D. 1000–1150). The principal goal of our excavations was to obtain information on site chronology, cultural affiliation, and basic economic activities in the Salado period (A.D. 1300–1450). There were a few surprises at the Fornholt site, which appears to be a substantial masonry pueblo dating between the Mimbres Classic period and the Salado period. We also revisited the **3-Up site** and excavated a deep test unit that should help us better understand the occupation history of this important site.

We look forward to completing current analyses and beginning the process of integrating what we learned with what we already know about Salado communities in the late prehistoric Southwest. We're fortunate to be welcome in an area with

compelling archaeology and generous community support. This past summer's fieldwork gave us a wealth of new data to work with, and we plan to present our findings in a variety of venues over the next year as we move toward synthesis. Several of our team members prepared these up-to-the-minute reports for you.

*Rob Jones, Field Supervisor and Preservation Fellow:*

This season's work yielded a wealth of obsidian samples from varying time periods, which will allow me to **examine Mule Creek obsidian use through time.**



*Rob Jones discusses excavation strategy with students and local guests on the Fornholt site in Mule Creek.*

The students quickly tired of pulling tiny black projectile points from the screen—I insisted that this was not usually a boring event! There are several distinct obsidian sources in Mule Creek, and I am interested in quantifying and understanding differences in nodule size and use in the valley. A variety of local samples is, therefore, quite useful. I continue to identify obsidian in museum collections so that I can map how far Mule Creek obsidian moved across the ancient southwestern landscape and—hopefully—identify who controlled its movement. Along with an analysis of local lithic technologies, this should contribute to our understanding

of community relationships and social networks in the area. For now, I have a rather large stack of broken rocks to analyze, so I plan on living in the Center lab for the next few months...

*Deb Huntley, Preservation Archaeologist:*

I spent a lot of my summer visiting museum collections in New Mexico, primarily the Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe and the Maxwell Museum in Albuquerque. My main goal was to track down collections from a number of Upper Gila sites excavated in the 1960s and 1970s. After sorting through many, many

boxes—with Katherine Dungan's help—I can safely say I've seen about 90% of the existing sherds from the area! I've also selected a sample of more than 200 sherds to submit for compositional analysis, which will **help us track pottery production and circulation in the region.** Important for our research as well is my observation that many sherds in these museum collections were originally identified as Gila Polychrome, but today would be classified as Cliff Polychrome, one of the later types in the Salado polychrome series.

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## Our Vision

At the Center for Desert Archaeology, we envision a society in which the places of the past are valued as the foundations for a vibrant future. As such, it is our mission to preserve the places of our shared past. We undertake this mission on behalf of those who find meaning in such places—and we deeply appreciate your partnership in this endeavor!





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## Viewpoint

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*Katherine Dungan, Field Supervisor and Research Assistant:*

Over the past year, I've worked with Deb to analyze the ceramics we recovered last summer. Our analysis shows **clear differences between two areas of the 3-Up site**. One of these areas suggests a late 13th-century migration of people with roots in the Kayenta tradition of northern Arizona. The other suggests a later migration of people who also show Kayenta ancestry, but had already become part of the tradition in which Salado polychromes were the decorated pottery of choice. Ceramics from earlier time periods at 3-Up indicate that the new arrivals might not have moved into an uninhabited frontier. We've just started analyzing the ceramics from this year's excavations, but in time, we should have a much better idea of what was happening at 3-Up and elsewhere in Mule Creek when the immigrants arrived.

*Jeff Clark (Preservation Archaeologist) and Brett Hill (Research Associate), Project Directors:*

Research in Mule Creek and the Upper Gila region continues the Center's long-term effort to better understand the demography of Salado populations living in the southern Southwest in the centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans. Following archaeologist Emil Haury, **we believe that the Salado phenomenon represents a complex hybridization of northern and southern native groups in the wake of widespread upheaval during the late 13th century**. Our earlier study of ceramic, obsidian, and settlement patterns documented the formation of multicultural communities and at least one diasporic community that linked dispersed Kayenta immigrants from north-east Arizona.

Preliminary results from our two field seasons indicate that **Mule Creek was occupied continuously by substantial populations from at least the early Mimbres period through the Salado period** (circa A.D. 800-1450). We now have evidence that the area was probably inhabited when Kayenta immigrants began arriving in the late 1200s.

**The dominant area of Kayenta settlement appears to be the 3-Up site**, where

large concentrations of pottery closely associated with these immigrants were recovered. Subsequent 14th-century components were identified at 3-Up and Gamalstad, with the strongest presence at 3-Up. Large quantities of Salado polychrome pottery—including Cliff Polychrome and other recently identified late types—were found at 3-Up. The greatest concentrations of these late types were found at a small, isolated locus 400 meters upstream from the main occupation.



*Top: Katherine Dungan (left) and Judy Crockett hike up a hillside made of obsidian near Mule Creek, New Mexico. Middle: During our Chaco Canyon field trip, Paul Reed led us to the Pueblo Bonito overlook. Bottom: Lindsay Romaniello (left) and Seth Boren lay out a test unit under the instruction of Rob Jones.*

## Become Acquainted

### Susan Jerome

*Susan and Alex Jerome graciously hosted the 2009 preservation archaeology field school at their Rocker Diamond X Ranch in Mule Creek, New Mexico.*

***I understand that you and Alex are not originally from this area. What drew you here? How would you describe your connection to this place?***

As Midwesterners, we longed to escape harsh winters, so we began a studied search for just the right spot in the Southwest. In fact, before we were married, Alex gave me a New Mexico flag—a not-too-subtle hint! We took a long road trip in 1983, with some definite ideas and expectations of what we were looking for. After a disappointing sojourn around the more southern areas of the state, we decided on a whim to check out Silver City. That led us to a real estate agent who ferried us out to Mule Creek. It was mid-May, but already green; a passing thunderstorm left a double rainbow, there were hummingbirds cavorting in the meadows, and the creek was laughing down its course. I felt I'd come home, and so did Alex.

***What do you value most about life in this community?***

There is a great deal of space and freedom. Our community is becoming more diverse and populated, but there is tolerance, if not full acceptance, of differing lifestyles. Neighbors still help neighbors, and there is an almost built-in neighborhood watch attitude about taking care of each other. Of course, there is a great deal of scrutiny as well, but overall, the lack of anonymity is compensated by community support for the individual.

At present, Mule Creek is going through some growing pains. We are beginning to consider concepts such as "common good" and wrestle with the implementation of projects like a fire station and restoration of the community center.

***How did you become interested in protecting and preserving archaeological sites in this region?***

As a child, I was fascinated with all things archaeological, especially Native American cultures. A friend of my mother who had been a professional archaeologist in the American Southwest sent me books that I treasured.

Shortly after we moved here, some landowners nearby began digging a ruin with heavy equipment. Their activity became more frenzied as the 1988 enactment date of the amendments to ARPA [Archaeological Resources Protection Act] approached, until they were using flood lights at night to unearth whatever they could with a backhoe. We were horrified, and their attitude about



*Susie Jerome.*

the sites being just another ranch resource was hard to grasp. I was particularly concerned about the destruction of the record in situ. Parcel by parcel, we have been able to purchase this site and the remainder of its related, undisturbed land, as well as another site.

Because our valley is so picturesque and desirable to retirees and developers, we are concerned that the area is at risk.

***As a one-time community organizer and volunteer teacher, what are some of your thoughts on how the Center can contribute to preservation in this region?***

Conveying the idea that Mule Creek archaeological sites are unique and fascinating, but fragile, is essential. Presenting current research in an accessible format and inviting community input will help build relationships. Just as illicit pot hunters exploit

archaeological remains for economic gain, there is a risk that viewing current residents as mere conduits to achieving academic and professional goals will stymie archaeological preservation. By considering landowners as true stewards and principal partners, archaeology extends a respectful hand in friendship. By advocating incentives for preservation actions which benefit the landowner, I believe the Center can be instrumental in forging trust and the ongoing dialogue required to preserve these treasures. Booths at the county fair, school visits, and presentations at the community center are a few ideas.

Despite the awesome natural beauty of the region, there is significant economic deprivation and unemployment that further endangers prehistoric sites. Helping this area make up for losses in ranching and mining revenues through sustainable small businesses or eco-tourism are other areas where outside expertise might have something to offer.

***Along the same lines, what is your own vision for the future of research and learning in this special place?***

We have been so fortunate to be the caretakers of this place! Everyday, I listen to the traffic report in Phoenix on the truck radio while I check on my cattle, and I realize what a precious sanctuary we have here.

Alex and I have long thought about what great learning opportunities exist here, for all age groups. In addition to the archaeological sites, we have two riparian

areas and a lot of wildlife. We are also interested in earth building and promoting those techniques. Because we have reconnected several parcels in the valley, we have an assortment

of accommodations for small groups. Our experience in hosting the field school this summer has us thinking about partnering with several institutions to further learning access to the ranch. By carefully designing the organizational structure and facilities, we can offer an experience to many learners even after we're gone. We can't think of a better legacy than to share this conscientiously with the future.

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***By considering landowners as true stewards and principal partners, archaeology extends a respectful hand in friendship.***

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*—Susan Jerome*



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### Mark the Date

October 3,  
Pieces of the Puzzle

## Participate

### Events and Opportunities

■ Phoenix-area residents and visitors, please join the Center at **Pueblo Grande Museum** for a celebration commemorating the closing of *Pieces of the Puzzle: New Perspectives on the Hohokam*. The gathering, which will include refreshments and a presentation by Center Preservation Archaeologist **Deb Huntley**, will take place on Saturday, October 3, at 2:00 p.m. Deb's talk is entitled *Life on the Frontier: Looking for the Salado in Southwestern New Mexico*.

■ Were you inspired by *Preserving Missions in the Pimería Alta*, the most recent issue of *Archaeology Southwest*? Why not take a **Kino Mission Tour** and experience these Spanish Colonial

churches in person, guided by expert historians and anthropologists? The three-day tours introduce you to eight communities in Sonora, Mexico, and



*On September 1, Archaeology Café participants and panelists shared insights on the future of the Tucson Origins Project.*

are sponsored by the educational non-profit **Southwestern Mission Research Center**. More information and dates for fall and spring through 2012 may be found at [www.southwestmissions.org](http://www.southwestmissions.org).

■ **Dr. James T. Watson**, Assistant Curator of Bioarchaeology at the Arizona State Museum, will speak on *Deserts, Diets, and Dentition: How the Introduction of Agriculture Affected Ancient Oral Health* at the **October 6** meeting of **Archaeology Café**. Our program begins at **6:00 p.m.** at **Casa Vicente**, 375 S. Stone Ave., Tucson. Settle in with tapas and a beverage, and make some new friends at one of these lively, informal events.

■ **Are you a member of the Center?** If not, we invite you to join us and take advantage of outstanding benefits, which include our **award-winning quarterly magazine, *Archaeology Southwest***, discounts in our online bookstore, and invitations to special events. **Memberships begin at \$25 per year**, and we also have a convenient monthly giving option that increases your gift's impact. Contact Kate Gann at (520) 882-6946, or join online at [www.cdarc.org](http://www.cdarc.org).