Toward a Grander Casa Grande

Field Representative Andy Laurenzi is the Center’s point person on a local preservation effort that seeks to expand the boundaries of Casa Grande Ruins National Monument.

Casa Grande Ruins National Monument (CGRNM) in Coolidge, Arizona, is among the state’s best-known cultural landmarks because of its striking, four-story “Great House,” one of the largest known prehistoric structures in the United States. CGRNM is not only the largest protected Hohokam site, but also the sole National Park unit that preserves and interprets Hohokam culture. The area enclosed within the park’s current boundary—about three-quarters of a square mile—also preserves some of the once-extensive village associated with the impressive adobe structure.

Working in conjunction with the City of Coolidge, Town of Florence, Friends of Casa Grande Ruins National Monument, Pinal County Historical Society, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and others, the Center for Desert Archaeology supports a National Park Service (NPS) proposal to expand the boundaries of this unique monument—and recommends an even more expansive vision that would preserve a significant portion of this vanishing cultural landscape.

A Hohokam Landscape

Between A.D. 300 and 1450, people known to archaeologists as the Hohokam lived and farmed in the river valleys of southern Arizona. Over time, they built and maintained massive irrigation canal systems to support agricultural production, which included maize and cotton. At least two dozen systems that watered tens of thousands of acres have been documented in the Phoenix Basin alone, along the lower Salt River and the middle Gila River. Villages containing 200 to 400 people—and some very large settlements that, at their peak, may have been home to more than 1,000 people—were spaced every two to three miles along the Phoenix Basin canal systems. [See Douglas B. Craig, “The Hohokam Archaeology of the Phoenix Basin,” Archaeology Southwest 21(4):1–2.]

These strings of neighboring villages formed what archaeologists call irrigation communities. The settlement at CGRNM was one of five large villages along a 22-mile-long canal (the Casa Grande Canal) that ran south of the Gila River. One of these large villages is the Adamsville Ruin, about five miles upstream from CGRNM. A shorter, 7-mile-long canal, the Escalante Canal, ran along the north side of the Gila River valley. This irrigation community included the sites of Escalante Ruin and Poston Butte Ruin. Interestingly, the Escalante irrigation community was an important cotton-producing area for the Hohokam—and it remains so today, as one can see on a drive through the modern communities of Coolidge and Florence.

By the time that the “Great House” was built, around A.D. 1300, Hohokam political and social organization had been undergoing complex changes for several generations. The structure itself represents one of the architectural expressions of these changes, together with a shift from pithouse to ground-level adobe compounds, from ballcourts that brought together large groups of people to platform mounds that raised some above others, and from clusters of dwellings encircling informal courtyards to walled villages around public plazas. By A.D. 1450, things had changed so drasti-

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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!
**Become Acquainted**

**Donna Tang**

Please join the Center in welcoming the newest member of our Board of Directors, Dr. Donna Tang. Kate interviewed Donna in mid-June, not long after she joined the board.

I've been struck by how many native Westerners and even native Tucsonans we have on our staff and board. Are you a native of the West, or of Tucson? What is your history with this community?

I consider Tucson and southern Arizona—its people, its history, its culture—as Home, even though I was born and raised in Connecticut. I came to Arizona for the first time in 1965, to work with the architect Paolo Soleri, and I realized that this was the place I really belonged. I moved to Tucson permanently in 1970, and have not regretted that move for even a moment since. My husband, David, is a second-generation Tucsonan whose family has been here since the late 1800s. His mother is one of “Las Doñas del Presidio de Tucson.”

Our records show that you have been involved with the Center as a member and volunteer since 1997! What drew you to become a member?

My first contact with the Center was as an archaeology student at Pima College, when I responded to a call for volunteers to help with a survey of the Cienega Valley under the direction of Michelle Stevens, who was a doctoral student at the time. That experience was so stimulating and enjoyable that I've been supporting the Center in every way I can since then.

Over those twelve years, how do you feel the organization has changed? From your perspective, what are the most significant changes?

The Center has certainly changed, most significantly in size and presence. When I first became involved, I think there was only one staff member, and the organization was sharing whatever corner of the Desert Archaeology, Inc., offices was available. The Center newsletter was called “Archaeology in Tucson,” and—well, it was kind of puny, even though very interesting. The Center's activities have moved beyond digs and surveys, and I have definitely been pleased with the changes I have seen because they all involve a dramatic deepening and expansion of the Center's fundamental mission—a mission in which I firmly believe.

As a board member, what are some new directions or programs you’d like the Center to explore?

As I said, the changes I've seen have been positive ones, and I'd like to see them continue. I'd like to see the Center become much more visible and distinct as a force for cultural preservation in this part of the world. That will involve continuing the Center's impressive activities in publications and public events, and taking on even more projects that involve cultural heritage preservation. I am very committed to preserving voices, stories, and places of the Southwest that are not often heard and that are in danger of fading away. Of course, this means the board will have to work hard to increase membership and ensure the financial health of the organization so that these activities can continue.

Everyone associated with the Center has favorite places in the Southwest—what are yours? What is your connection to them?

When I first came to the Southwest, one of the places that fascinated me the most was Chaco Canyon. I had been interested in Mesoamerican architecture and culture since childhood, and that was my first physical encounter with an ancient American civilization. I've pursued my interest ever since, as a scholar of Archaeology and of Comparative Cultural and Literary Studies, with an emphasis on the built environment (architecture, cities, geography) and on Latin America. Chaco Canyon, especially the Chetro Ketl ruin, has never lost its magical appeal for me, which has only deepened as we learn more about the prehistory of the Southwest.

If you'd like to visit Chaco Canyon and see Chetro Ketl for yourself, start here: www.nps.gov/chcu. To learn more about visionary architect Paolo Soleri and Arcosanti, go to www.arcosanti.org.
The Center for Desert Archaeology and Salmon Ruins Museum received the State of New Mexico’s 2009 Heritage Preservation Award in the category of Heritage Organization. The award recognizes the success of the ongoing partnership between the Center and Salmon Ruins, which has “led to the curtailment of important artifacts, insightful research, and scholarly publications.” Center Preservation Archaeologist Paul Reed, Center President Bill Doelle, and Salmon Ruins Executive Director Larry Baker are at the heart of this eight-year-long partnership, and we are so happy that their vision, dedication, and hard work have been recognized and honored in this way.

Center Advisory Board Member and Research Associate Bill Robinson is the recipient of the 2008 Byron Cummings Award. The award will be presented by the Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society (AAHS) at the Pecos Conference in August. Previously, AAHS presented Bill with the Victor Stoner Award, which recognized his long-term contributions to public awareness of regional history and preservation issues. Dr. Robinson is currently honored for decades of outstanding research and numerous contributions to southwestern archaeology. Over the course of his career, Bill has undertaken fieldwork at diverse locations, including Point of Pines, Spanish missions in southern Arizona, and Ancestral Puebloan sites in the Kayenta area of northeastern Arizona. He received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Arizona. Bill joined the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research as a Research Associate in 1963, and was subsequently promoted to Assistant Professor, Assistant Director, and ultimately, to Director. Bill’s primary research interests have been dendrochronology and paleoclimatic reconstruction; he has also made important contributions to scholarly understanding of the occupation of southern Arizona by Piman-speaking groups in the early historic period, co-authoring a seminal text on Tohono O’odham pottery. Although Bill retired from the university in 1993, he has remained active in research and publication, and we at the Center have the pleasure of his company every Tuesday and Thursday. Together with Patrick Lyons and Gloria Fenner, Bill is preparing a publication of Rex Gerald’s 1958 manuscript on work at the Davis Ranch site in the San Pedro River Valley.

Congratulations, Bill, on this well-deserved honor! [Editor’s note: special thanks to Patrick Lyons for this summary of Bill’s achievements.]

Center Research Associate Brett Hill, Preservation Fellow Rob Jones, and Research Assistant Katherine Dungan have just returned from the second season of the Mule Creek Archaeological Testing Project. The Center and Hendrix College returned to Mule Creek, New Mexico, this June, to continue ongoing research into late prehistoric migrations and social connections along the Upper Gila. Seven undergraduate students learned excavation and survey techniques from Center staff and volunteers, took field trips to Chaco Canyon and the Gila Cliff Dwellings, and assisted in the preparation of a field school favorite, pit-roasted goat. Laboratory processing and artifact analysis has begun back in Tucson, and a preliminary report on last summer’s fieldwork in Mule Creek is now available. Contact Rob at the Center for more information, (520) 882-6946.

Congratulations also go out to Rob Jones and Katherine Dungan for completing their Masters degrees in Anthropology at the University of Arizona. Rob submitted “A Reevaluation of the Point of Pines Phase,” and Katherine examined “Visibility, Monumentality, and Community in the Chacoan Community at Kin Bineola, New Mexico.” Well done!

We’re happy to be seeing a lot more of Preservation Fellow Aaron Wright! Now that his fieldwork in the South Mountains is completed, Aaron has relocated from the Phoenix area to Tucson. He is beginning to write his dissertation, and is still smiling! Aaron’s kind, considerate presence only adds to the family feeling around the office. Aaron is also looking for some skilled volunteers to assist him with technical illustration of rock art panels and preliminary lithic analysis. If you have experience in either of these areas and would like to help, please contact Kate Sarther Gann at kate@cdarc.org.

Preservation Archaeologist and Digital Media Specialist Doug Gann, Membership Coordinator Kate Sarther, and Preservation K-9 Bernard were united in marriage on April 11, 2009, at the historic Old Fort Lowell Chapel in Tucson, Arizona. The Sonoran Desert blessed the occasion with fantastic thunderstorms and a perfectly-timed rainbow.

Center President Bill Doelle (left) and Salmon Ruins Executive Director Larry Baker (right) accepted the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Award in a ceremony on May 2 at the Santa Fe Community Convention Center.

Preservation K-9 Bernard in his wedding attire.
Participate

Events and Opportunities

- If you’re heading to the Pecos Conference in Cortez, Colorado, next month (August 6–9), be sure to stop by the Center’s book and information table to say hello, renew your membership, and do a little shopping! Information on the gathering itself may be found at http://pecos.cortezculturalcenter.org.

- We’re getting ready to kick off the second season of Archaeology Café, our monthly “happy hour” discussion forum devoted to cultural and scientific topics. We meet at Casa Vicente (375 S. Stone Avenue, Tucson, Arizona) at 6:00 pm on the first Tuesday of every month from September through May. Speakers address the group for about 20 minutes, followed by a moderated Q & A period. We are filling the schedule now—please contact Kate Sarther Gann, (kate@cdarc.org) if you’ll be in the Tucson area and are interested in sharing your research at one of these lively, informal events. Visit www.cdarc.org for more on our series, and check out www.sciencecafes.org for more on this growing grassroots movement. We videotape these events and will be posting available footage as soon as we can. Hope to see you September 1!

- August 20 is Tucson’s 234th birthday! Visit www.tucsonsbirthday.org to learn more about history- and preservation-oriented events going on all month.

Viewpoint

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A Landmark for Centuries of Visitors

The first known written description of the “casa grande” and surrounding archaeological remains appears in a 1694 journal entry by Father Eusebio Kino, a Jesuit missionary and early explorer of the region. On a 1697 journey up the San Pedro River that turned westward along the Gila River, Kino was accompanied by Captain Juan Mateo Manje, who also wrote about the thick-walled adobe structure and the canal in his journal. Missionaries actually held masses at the structure in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Lieutenant Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza’s expedition came through in 1776, and a military detachment under Brigadier General Stephen W. Kearny visited in 1846. As more written accounts appeared and the railroad came within 20 miles of the site (and an associated stagecoach line went right past it), interest in the place grew—to its detriment.

Graffiti, vandalism, and souvenir-hunting took a serious toll.

In the 1880s, archaeological assessments on the part of Adolph Bandelier (1883–1884) and Frank Hamilton Cushing (1887–1888, under the auspices of the Hemenway Southwestern Archaeological Expedition) raised awareness of the deterioration of the site. U.S. Senate-approved repair work was initiated, and in 1892, President Benjamin Harrison established Casa Grande as the first archaeological reserve in the United States. This, in turn, spurred the archaeological resource protection movement in America—and ultimately ensured the relatively high integrity of the architectural remains visitors see today at CGRNM. President Woodrow Wilson made the site a national monument in 1918. CGRNM has been managed by the NPS ever since.

Protecting a Landscape, Expanding a Legacy

CGRNM states its purpose as “the preservation and interpretation of the Casa Grande ruins and other ancient buildings and objects of prehistoric interest” (Casa Grande Ruins Foundation Statement, 2007, page 3). Its role in educating the public about the Hohokam, archaeological preservation, and the importance of the place to descendant Native American groups is also acknowledged.

In keeping with this mission, the NPS is pursuing a unique opportunity to expand the boundaries of the monument. Their proposal would bring more of the original village, part of the Casa Grande Canal, and a significant portion of the Adamsville Ruin within CGRNM’s boundaries—and thus within its ability to preserve and protect those resources. Possible interpretive additions include a pedestrian trail between CGRNM and Adamsville Ruin, which would give visitors an even more complete sense of this particular swath of Hohokam landscape and the relative ease of interaction between neighboring villages in an irrigation community.

Field Representative Andy Laurenzi—who has joined the Center through a partnership arrangement with the National Trust for Historic Preservation—is working with local partners to strongly support the NPS proposal, informally known as the...
“south side proposal.” At the same time, the local partners have identified an additional opportunity to significantly expand the CGRNM and to further enrich preservation of a fundamental Hohokam cultural landscape. Known as the Citizens’ Proposal, or “the north side proposal,” this visionary plan would incorporate the entire Escalante irrigation community on the north side of the Gila River.

According to Dr. Glenn Rice, an archaeologist who has done extensive work on the north side canal area, “…a remarkably large part of the Escalante irrigation community…has remained intact, including canal segments, pithouse villages, adobe compounds, dry-land farming areas, irrigated farming areas, platform mounds, ballcourts, petroglyphs, and a remarkable set of rock shrines…” (Casa Grande Ruins National Monument Expansion Proposal, 2009, page 3). The rock shrines are designated Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) of the Akimel O’odham people of the Gila River Indian Community, one of several Native American groups who recognize the Hohokam as their ancestors.

As many Center friends know, the pace of development in metropolitan Phoenix and Tucson over the past thirty years has provided professional archaeologists with a critical opportunity to expand our knowledge and understanding of the Hohokam, even as they work against the clock and ahead of the bulldozers. There is no question, however, that ancient sites and landscapes are being obliterated. Despite the current economic and housing crises and water issues, population in the metropolitan Phoenix area is still projected to double over the next thirty years—meaning that much of what remains will be lost.

Laudably, southern Arizona communities have preserved—and continue to preserve—portions of some important Hohokam sites as public archaeological parks, but collectively, these parks represent a small fragment of the prehistoric cultural landscape that was once present in southern Arizona. Some of the best-preserved Hohokam landscapes are on tribal lands, especially the Gila River Indian Community, but broader public access is constrained. The proposed CGRNM expansion is, therefore, a truly singular opportunity to preserve a significant portion of this cultural landscape for future public understanding of our shared past, and as a window onto the scale and breadth of the Hohokam world.

**What Happens Next—and What You Can Do**

Expansion of CGRNM requires an Act of Congress. The lead on such legislation often falls to the local member of Congress—in this case, Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick. The Center and its partners are working to promote both the NPS proposal and the Citizens’ Proposal. Hopefully, with Congresswoman Kirkpatrick’s leadership, legislation will be drafted and introduced this year. The Center and its partners are currently working with the Town of Florence and the Gila River Indian Community to promote governing body resolutions in support of the legislative proposal.

The Center urges anyone who is interested in learning more and helping promote these preservation efforts to contact Andy Laurenzi at the Center for Desert Archaeology, (520) 882-6946, or at alaurezi@cdarc.org.

The website of CGRNM is located at www.nps.gov/cagr. A link to a pdf of the Casa Grande Ruins Foundation Statement may be found on the “Management” page. Current partners in this preservation effort include the City of Coolidge, the Town of Florence, the Friends of Casa Grande Ruins National Monument, the Pinal County Historical Society, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (www.preservationnation.org), the National Parks Conservation Association (www.npca.org), and the Sonoran Institute (www.sonoraninstitute.org).
Important places. Within each region, locations are discussed in rough chronological order. Places that became significant after A.D. 1900 are not included. Each place is numbered and may be located on regional maps within the text; several are also depicted in color photographs.

Suggested readings and an extensive bibliography complete this impressive guidebook—an essential companion for any heritage road trips you might be taking this summer!

Royalties from the sale of the book benefit the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.


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**Bookshelf**

**American Indian Places**

“This will become an indispensable guide to those special places that remind us that every place we think we ‘discovered’ was already someone else’s home.”

—Ken Burns, filmmaker

Indeed, many reviewers use the word “indispensable” to describe this comprehensive guide to 366 places that are significant to American Indians and open to the public. Frances H. Kennedy, the editor and principal contributor, worked in land conservation for more than thirty years. She also served as editor of, and principal contributor to, *The Civil War Battlefield Guide*, a bestseller now in its second edition.

Organized into five geographic regions, the book presents concise, readable essays by Native and non-Native scholars—

including Kennedy, Center Preservation Archaeologist Jeff Clark, Center Research Associate Patrick Lyons, and other Center members and friends—that provide cultural and historical context to these important places. Within each region, locations are discussed in rough chronological order. Places that became significant after A.D. 1900 are not included. Each place is numbered and may be located on regional maps within the text; several are also depicted in color photographs.

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