

Preservation Archaeology at the Dinwiddie Site: Research Update for 2015

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This past summer, Archaeology Southwest completed our final field season of excavations at the Dinwiddie site (LA 106003) near Cliff, New Mexico. During the summers of 2013 through 2015, the Archaeology Southwest–University of Arizona Preservation Archaeology Field School introduced 34 undergraduates and five graduate students from 30 different universities to field archaeology through this important site. As we prepare a detailed final report of our findings, we offer this brief update on some of the highlights of our research.

The Dinwiddie site is an adobe village of about 80 to 100 rooms inhabited from about A.D. 1300–1450. Archaeologists working in New Mexico call this period the Cliff phase, after the town of Cliff. Cliff phase villagers participated in what we describe as “the Salado ideology”—a system of shared beliefs and traditions that was probably similar to a religion. Archaeologists think the Salado ideology functioned, in part, as a social “glue,” uniting groups with different geographic and cultural origins. People used specific symbols and decoration styles on pottery and other objects to express Salado ideas.

Important aspects of the Salado ideology originated with Kayenta groups who had left northeastern Arizona in the late 1200s. In Mule Creek, pottery shows that a group of Kayenta people joined an



A view of the Dinwiddie site in 2015.



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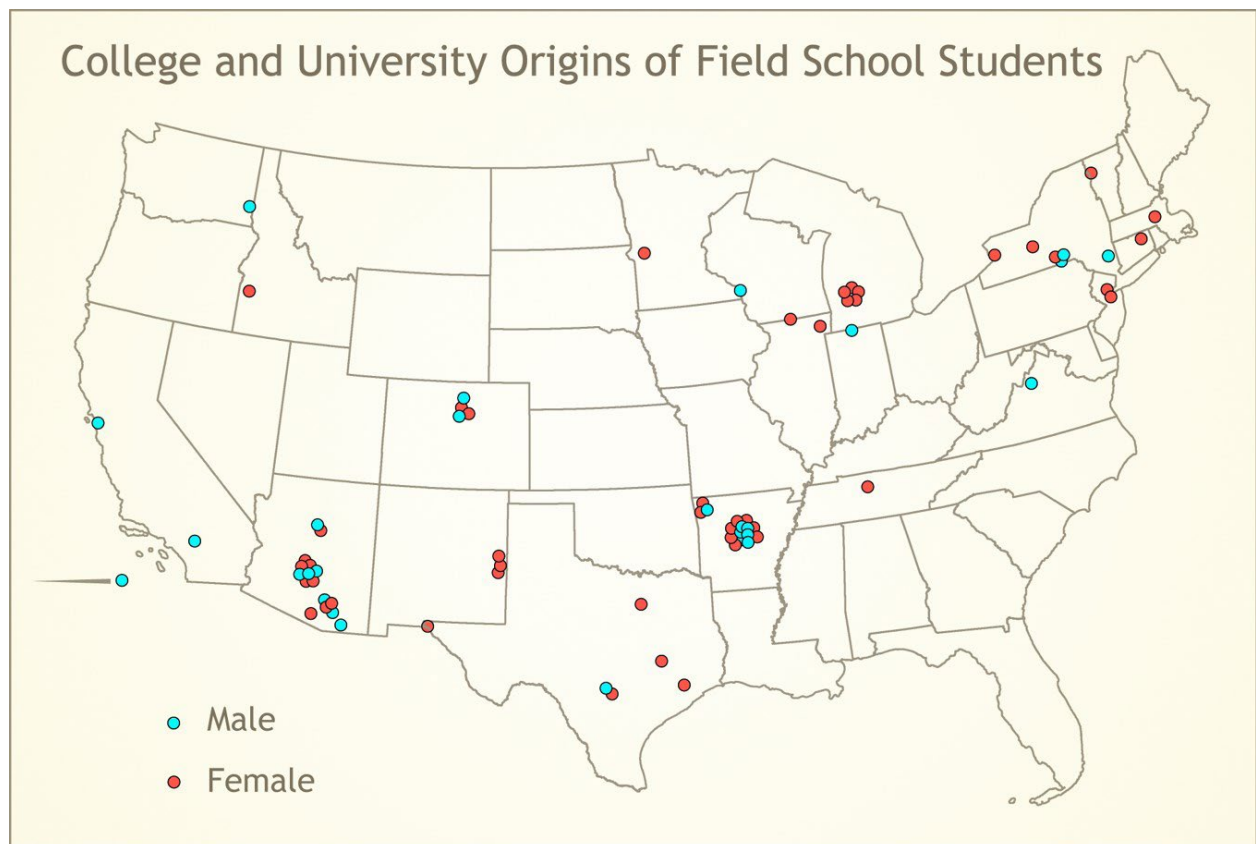
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existing village at the 3-Up site. At the Dinwiddie site, we see evidence of Salado ideas and cultural influences linked to the Kayenta, but no convincing evidence that a large group of people migrated directly from the Kayenta area. Instead, we documented an interesting combination of local and nonlocal artifacts, pottery, and tool-making traditions that show people here participated in the Salado ideological system, while also maintaining connections to several different areas.

The Dinwiddie site includes five areas of architecture, three of which were the focus of our work. Roomblocks 1, 2, and 3 are easy to see from the modern road. They show evidence of historical disturbance from a range of sources, including an old wagon road, pot-hunting in the 1930s, and road construction. Some rooms in Roomblocks 1 and 2 were excavated by avocational archaeologists Jack and Vera Mills in the 1960s. This gave us a perfect opportunity to investigate the Cliff phase while minimizing impacts on intact archaeological deposits.

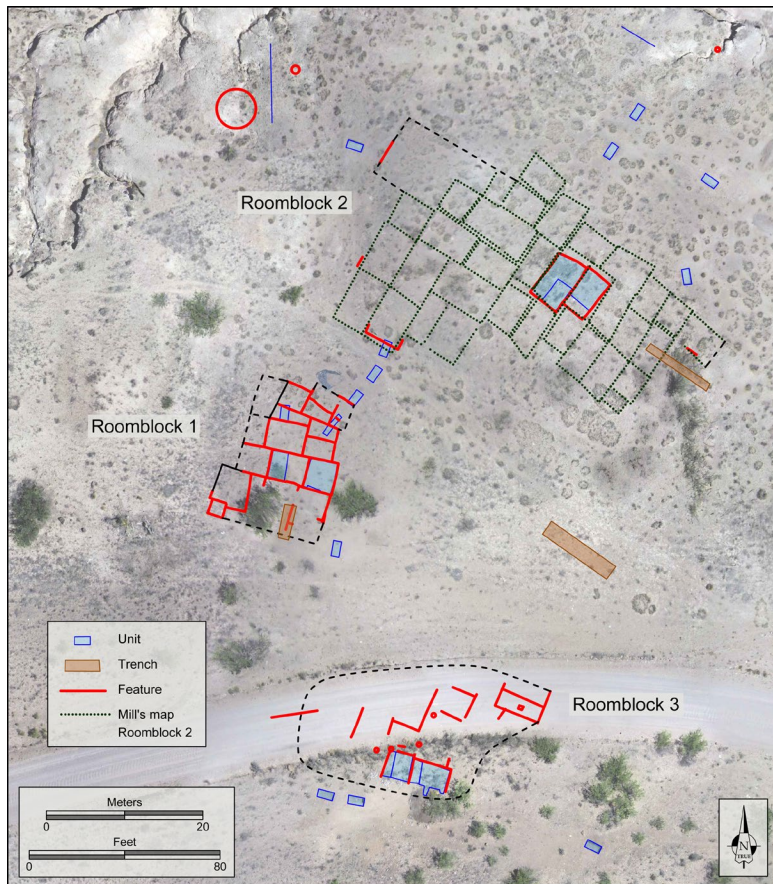
Roomblock 1 comprises about 20 to 30 adobe rooms. Several were excavated by the Millses, but no documentation survives to tell us which ones. In 2015, we excavated portions of two rooms in this area. Both rooms were shallow, and their floors were intact.

In one room, residents created a new mud-plaster floor several centimeters above the room's original floor surface. They probably did this remodeling in order to counteract unevenness and wear after



Archaeology Southwest students in our 2008–2015 field schools in Mule Creek and at the Dinwiddie site came from 21 different states. MAP: CATHERINE GILMAN





Map of the three excavated roomblocks at the Dinwiddie site. There is an additional area of architecture several hundred yards to the west of this area, and a heavily disturbed area on the hilltop to the south. MAP: CATHERINE GILMAN USING DATA FROM MICHAEL BRACK

long use of the original floor. Both floors contained many pits, including postholes and storage pits.

The second room we excavated here showed no evidence of remodeling, but it does show two different methods of foundation building in its walls. Two walls have a single row of large cobbles for foundations, and two others have a double row of slabs. This suggests that people added walls over time.

In addition to excavating in these two rooms, we dug shallow trenches along the tops of walls in order to examine the architectural plan of the roomblock. Evidence of remodeling was also visible here, with new walls added as residents changed the ways they used these rooms over time. Interesting artifacts from these rooms included several bone tools and a bone pendant.

Roomblock 2, where the Millses focused their work in the 1960s, includes 40 to 50 adobe rooms. The rooms they excavated held many whole pots, a stone head, and other unusual items we did not find in the parts of the site we excavated in 2013–2015. This difference in objects suggests Roomblock 2 was a special group of rooms in some way. We excavated portions of two rooms in this roomblock, and found they were connected by an unusual T-shaped doorway. This type of doorway is rare in this area, although examples are known from areas like Chaco Canyon to the north and Paquimé in northern Mexico.

In one room (excavated in 2014), there was no evidence of remodeling. In the second (excavated in 2015), residents had remodeled by building a new room floor and two reconfigured walls some time after the original construction of the room. The T-shaped doorway was probably also filled in around this time. These two rooms also contained a higher proportion of El Paso Polychrome pottery than the rest of the site, indicating a stronger link to areas to the south and east. Perhaps residents lived in this roomblock at a slightly different time during the 1300s than the rest of the site, or perhaps these residents had different geographic or cultural origins.





Dinwiddie Polychrome (left) and Cliff Polychrome (right) vessels have characteristic Salado decoration on the outside. The insides are purposely “smudged” with polished black carbon deposits, a traditional practice in the local Mogollon area. Such combinations of styles show ways residents combined older cultural traditions to create a new group identity for themselves. The sherd is from the Dinwiddie site excavations in 2013–2015. The whole vessels are from the Mills Collection at Eastern Arizona College (photos by Mat Devitt).

Although the modern road destroyed large portions of Roomblock 3, our 2014 crew excavated remaining portions of two rooms and outlined many wall foundations in the roadbed. Like most other rooms we excavated, these rooms also showed extensive remodeling, indicating people used them for a long time. We also found two sherds of a perforated plate—an artifact type linked to Kayenta migrants—in this area.

Interestingly, neither the Millses nor we found much distinctively Kayenta pottery at the Dinwiddie site. Cliff Polychrome and Dinwiddie Polychrome are much more common. These pottery types have distinctive Salado decorations on their outsides, and shiny black “smudged” interiors characteristic of pre-1300s local traditions in the Mogollon area. Although a few residents might have come from the Kayenta area, most came from other traditions, and this new community used Salado beliefs and ways of doing things to forge a common identity.



The many floor pits in this room floor include a row of small postholes along the right wall and larger pits for storage elsewhere in the room.

Historic looters’ pits were also unexpectedly interesting. Both the excavated rooms in Roomblock 1 held looters’ pits predating the Millses’ work. Although they had filled in over time, these pits were recognizable





This “blob” of plain pottery sherds appeared in a looters’ pit in Roomblock 1. We enjoyed finding this hoof print preserved in a layer of melted adobe nearby.

by differences in the texture of the soil, by pick-marks preserved in room walls, and by the pieces of metal and glass they contained. One room in Roomblock 1 contained a bucket-sized “blob” of plainware sherds marking a place where looters dumped sherds they decided not to keep. A room in Roomblock 2 contained a looters’ pit with multiple glass and metal fragments. Makers’ marks, soldered areas, and other characteristics show these items were manufactured in the 1910–1930 era. An old wagon road passing through the site is visible today as a low area between Roomblocks 1 and 2, and it also appears on 1881 maps of the area. These traces of the historic past form an interesting

link between 14th-century and early 20th-century uses of the Dinwiddie site.



The unusual T-shaped doorway beginning just under the pink string line was eventually filled in with mud mortar and stones as residents changed the configuration of rooms in this area.



Important artifacts found at the Dinwiddie site



These sherds of Maverick Mountain Polychrome (above) and a perforated plate (above left) found at the Dinwiddie site in 2014 are marks of Kayenta influence from north-eastern Arizona. Although this influence was important, not many Kayenta people lived there. We found only two perforated plate sherds and 31 sherds (less than 2% of the painted pottery) of Maverick Mountain polychrome. The whole vessels shown here (left) are from southern Arizona.



An El Paso Polychrome sherd, a type commonly used in northern Mexico and west Texas. We did not find any whole pots at in the trash deposits at Dinwiddie, but examining the proportions of different types of broken sherds tells us much more about the site's social ties to different parts of the Southwest.





Projectile points from the Dinwiddie site consist largely of unnotched triangular and small side-notched arrow points made from obsidian, chalcedony, and chert. These styles are typical of the Cliff phase in southwestern New Mexico. An exception is the obsidian point (broken prehistorically) labeled FN 730, made in a style called Gypsum from the Middle Archaic period (3500–2100 B.C.). A resident of the Dinwiddie site probably found this point on a much earlier site and took it home.



Students analyzing pottery sherds in 2015.





People used two styles of manos for grinding corn and other foods. Manos with plain edges (like the examples shown here) are found throughout the Southwest, whereas those with finger-grooves are associated with northern Ancestral Pueblo influence. All of the manos we found in 2013–2015 had smooth edges, but the Millses found 17 with grooves on their sides for the user's fingers, another sign of the mixture of cultural backgrounds represented among the people who lived here.



Two types of stone axe heads were found at the Dinwiddie site. On the example on the left, a groove for hafting into a wooden handle extends $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way around this axe head, a trait linked to the Hohokam area to the south. The example above has a groove for hafting extending all the way around the axe head, a trait associated with the Ancestral Pueblo area to the north. The Millses reported finding 23 axe heads in the late 1960s; 75% of those were $\frac{3}{4}$ -grooved, and the rest were full-grooved, showing a mix of northern and southern cultural influences. Our 2013–2015 excavations found the same proportions: three $\frac{3}{4}$ -grooved axe heads, and one full-grooved.

