

ARCHAEOLOGY IN TUCSON

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Newsletter of the Institute for American Research

Summer 1987

TRULY THE ORIGINAL TUCSON!

In our last *AIT* newsletter, we presented some of the background about the San Agustin Mission, the original Tucson. The test excavations that were conducted by the Institute in June were located just west of the wall of the mission complex, and they are helping to establish that the first Tucsonans settled at the base of the black rock, now known as "A Mountain," over 2000 years ago. While Tucson has long made the claim of being the oldest continuously inhabited city in the U.S. on the basis of the Hohokam pithouse that was discovered under the northeast corner of the presidio wall in 1954, these Archaic pithouses may eventually prove that Tucson's continuous occupation began 1000 years earlier than had once been believed!

The first eight trenches yielded nothing of much antiquity, and the next two produced garbage from the 1950s. But down near the bottom of the 11th trench was a thin black line of charcoal that extended nearly 11 feet, unmistakably the remains of a burned pithouse. The small size, the depth from the modern surface, and the complete lack of pottery all suggested that this house predated the Hohokam. By the time all 20 test trenches were completed, some 15 of these ancient pithouses had been exposed.

It is likely that these first Tucsonans spent only the summer and fall living at the base of A Mountain. The cultivation of corn, or maize, a productive species of grass that originated in Mexico, was a major reason that the Archaic people settled down in a single place and made more substantial houses. Ten out of the eleven soil samples that were examined for evidence of charred seeds yielded cobs or kernels of corn.

Additional testing will be necessary before a final plan is developed for the archaeological remains that were found along the proposed route of Mission Road. That work will probably occur in the early fall.

Correction: We regret that in our last newsletter we forgot to credit the Tucson Corral of Westerners as the publishers of the booklet on San Agustin Mission written by Jack Williams.

CATALINA STATE PARK SURVEY

In the mid-1800s, Francisco Romero built his stone-walled ranch buildings atop an ancient Hohokam village in what is now Catalina State Park. Romero's ranch is mostly rubble now, but some foundation walls are still visible. A photograph from 1910 gives us some feel for what the original ranch would have been like, but to feel the isolation of Romero's ranch and the fear inspired by hostile Apaches requires a vivid imagination for the increasingly urban modern Tucsonan.



Two stone-walled buildings at Romero Ranch in 1910. Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society Library, Tucson.

The Institute's archaeological survey in Catalina State Park was funded by grants from the State Historic Preservation Office, the local ANL Foundation, and in-kind contributions by Geo-Map, Inc. and numerous volunteers. A remarkable set of contour maps that shows many of the details of the prehistoric site that underlies Romero's Ranch was prepared by Geo-Map, and intensive collections of artifacts from the site surface have given us new insights into the age and growth of this ancient village.

The pottery sherds indicate the village was founded early in the Hohokam era, perhaps between A.D. 200-400, and it reached its peak between A.D. 800-1000. The Romero Ruin was probably always the largest Hohokam settlement in the Catalina State Park, but 32 other prehistoric sites have now been recorded within the park boundaries.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

ARCHAEOLOGY IN TUCSON

The *Archaeology in Tucson* membership program is ending its first year. We managed to convince 150 of you that *AIT* was worth joining. We hope everyone will renew their membership for 1987-1988. Our plans are to have even more activities for you to enjoy in the coming membership year.

Not very many of you have been taking advantage of our project reports. The reports range in length from 100 pages to 500 pages and are full of interesting information on the Hohokam and Archaic Indians. Remember you get 10% off the already low prices. If you are interested in viewing any of the publications, please stop by the office and ask for Tom or Jennifer.

Our goal this membership year is to gain 250 new members. We need your help. Several members are needed to act as membership chairpersons to help recruit new members. Our plan is to have at least 10 chairpersons choose five friends who will each be responsible for recruiting five new members. This would give us our 250 new members. If you are interested in becoming a chairperson, give Tom a call at 622-6663.

We need new members for several reasons. First, and foremost, we need membership dues to pay for the printing and mailing of informative newsletters. Second, we need more members to help raise the awareness of *Archaeology in Tucson* in the community. And third, we need your input so we know what direction the membership program should take so it is a meaningful and worthwhile endeavor for everybody concerned (please fill out enclosed survey form).



VOLUNTEERS

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer on an archaeological survey, excavation, or in the lab, please give Tom a call. We have added a volunteer category to our computer list of members. This will make it much easier for us to contact you when a volunteer project becomes available (see related article on survey volunteers). Those of you who were on the volunteer list this past year should call if you want to continue to be called when we have a project. A lot of you on the list were not able to help out when called this past year. Thanks to all who were able to help on projects.

HELP US DISCOVER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Archaeology in Tucson members now have the opportunity to participate in an all-volunteer archaeological survey being conducted by Allen Dart, a research archaeologist at the Institute for American Research. The two main purposes of this survey are: (1) to gather information on what kind of archaeological materials exist in the upper foothills of the Avra and Altar valleys southwest of Tucson, and (2) to provide an opportunity for people interested in archaeology to get out and see archaeological sites, and to become familiar with archaeological survey techniques. Information collected during the survey will help fill in our picture of prehistoric life in this area whose archaeology is still little-known. It will help us interpret where people preferred to live in these valleys, what portions of the valleys they avoided, and how and why their settlement locations changed through time.



Field instruction will be offered in general survey techniques, basic compass reading, recording archaeological remains, and plotting archaeological finds on topographic maps and on aerial photos. Travel time to the survey area is about one hour from the center of Tucson (carpooling is encouraged). In addition to field experience, instruction in processing collections from archaeological surveys will be offered to those who are interested. All plans to be surveying at least twice per month, usually on Saturdays and Sundays, through the rest of the year.

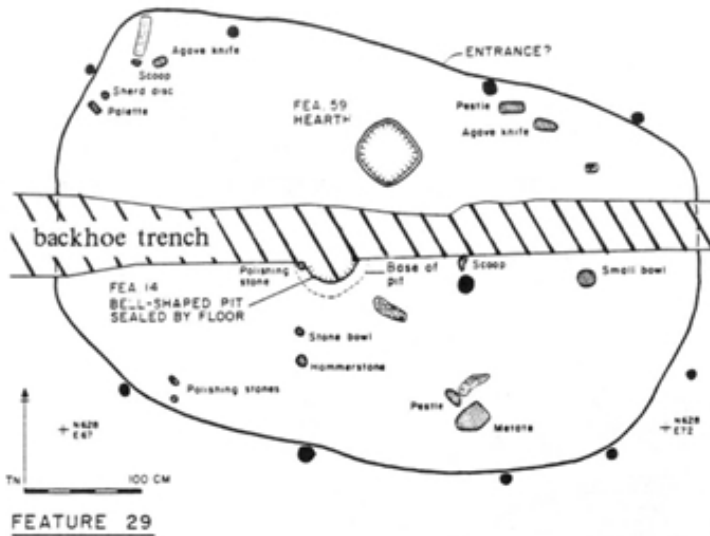
To volunteer, you must be in good physical condition, able to walk as many as five miles per day, and able to spend up to 8 hours outdoors in *hot desert* conditions. You also have to bring your own lunch and carry at least a quart of water. And if you have a compass, please bring it, but no equipment purchases are required. Because this is an all-volunteer project we won't be sticking to a rigid schedule, so you must arrange with Al the dates that you can participate in the field survey. Al wants to be able to give personal attention to each volunteer, so no more than four people can be taken into the field at one time.

For further information, call Al Dart at 622-6663.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

RESPONSE REQUIRED!!!

We have mailed out over 800 copies of the four *AIT* newsletters that were produced this past year. This has been costly, but many of you have responded by joining *Archaeology in Tucson*. For those of you who have not yet joined, this will be your last Newsletter unless you write and tell us otherwise (see survey form).



BACKHOES AND ARCHAEOLOGY

This drawing illustrates the remains of a Hohokam pithouse and its contents that were discovered by using a backhoe at the Valencia Site in 1983. It is hard to think of such heavy pieces of equipment, like a backhoe, being used to do such delicate work as excavation of prehistoric sites. But, the backhoe and a conscientious operator have proved to be an invaluable team to archaeology. It would take us weeks, and in some cases years, to locate features (pithouses, roasting pits, canals, etc.) at some Hohokam sites if we were to use only hand excavation techniques.

No question about it, the backhoe bucket does damage archaeological features. But the trade-off in time saved and efficiency in excavating an archaeological site is worth it.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CALENDAR

July 6-24. Summer Activities continue at Eldon Pueblo, Coconino National Forest, Flagstaff. Contact: Carl Phagan at 1-774-5211 or Peter Pilies at 1-527-7410.

Monday, July 20, 7:30 p.m. A talk by Al Ferg on the Western Apache at the next Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society meeting, Room 301, Bioscience West Bldg., N. Fremont and E. Lowell, U of A.

Saturday, July 25. Second Annual Open House at Homolovi State Park, Winslow, AZ. Contact: Chuck Adams or Rich Lange at 1-289-4835.



WISH LIST

We have a list of items that we need to help things flow a little easier around here. If you have any type of office furniture, desk chairs, drafting equipment, a typewriter, computer!, or whatever, give Tom a call. We can probably use it. All gifts to the Institute are tax-deductible.



POT HUNTING

It destroys our cultural resources and it is illegal. If you see someone destroying an archaeological site, call:

1-800- VANDALS

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN RESEARCH



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

SURVEY FORM

1. Do you receive the AIT newsletter by mail? Yes__ No__
2. Have you attended an AIT slide/lecture presentation? Yes__ No__
How did you hear about the presentation?
Did you enjoy it? Yes__ No__
Will you go to other presentations?
Can we do anything else to make the presentations more enjoyable? Yes__ No__
3. Would you recommend AIT to a friend? Yes__ No__
4. Have you gone on any of the AIT site tours? Yes__ No__
Which one(s)?
Did you have a good time? Yes__ No__
What could we have done to make tours more enjoyable?

Will you go on other AIT site tours? Yes__ No__
5. Have you purchased any AIT publications? Yes__ No__
Which one(s)?

Did you find them informative? Yes__ No__
Were they too technical?
Do you think 20 to 50 page popular volumes on Tucson Basin archaeology would be interesting? Yes__ No__
Would you purchase a popular volume?

Yes__ No__
8. Have you volunteered on any AIT projects? Yes__ No__
9. Would you like to be added to our volunteer list? Yes__ No__
10. What other types of programs would you like to see AIT offer? Yes__ No__
11. Do you still wish to receive the AIT newsletter? Yes__ No__
12. If you are not a member of AIT, why haven't you joined?

Remember, AIT was formed for you. We want it to be an active membership program with input from the members.

Comments?

Name:

Address:

Phone: