

ARCHAEOLOGY IN TUCSON

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ROMERO RUIN TOUR AND PICNIC

Pack a picnic lunch, put on your hiking shoes, and take a short drive to Catalina State Park to meet your fellow *AIT* members. On Saturday November 14 from 10 AM to 3 PM *Archaeology in Tucson* members can tour the most impressive site in the park, the Romero Ruin. You will see first hand the Hohokam ballcourt, the Classic period compound wall, the rock walls of Francisco Romero's mid-nineteenth century ranch, and a wide variety of artifacts.

The Romero Ruin has not been excavated. Therefore, it provides an opportunity to see a major village and to learn to search for the subtle clues that help reveal the past. The beautiful natural setting provided by Catalina State Park is an ideal place to appreciate the complex and ingenious ways used by the Hohokam to adapt to their desert environment.

Primitive Pottery Making. An added attraction will be a pottery making demonstration by Paul and Laurel Thornburg. The Thornburgs use the same materials and methods that were used by the Hohokam in order to replicate prehistoric pottery. They will demonstrate the shaping, painting, and firing of Hohokam pottery. Your questions are welcome, and some pottery will be available for purchase.

This event is for *AIT* members. There is no charge, but you will have to pay a \$2 day-use fee at the Park entrance. See the map on page 3 for details on how to get to Catalina State Park and where to go once you are inside. In case of rain, this event will be re-scheduled to November 21.

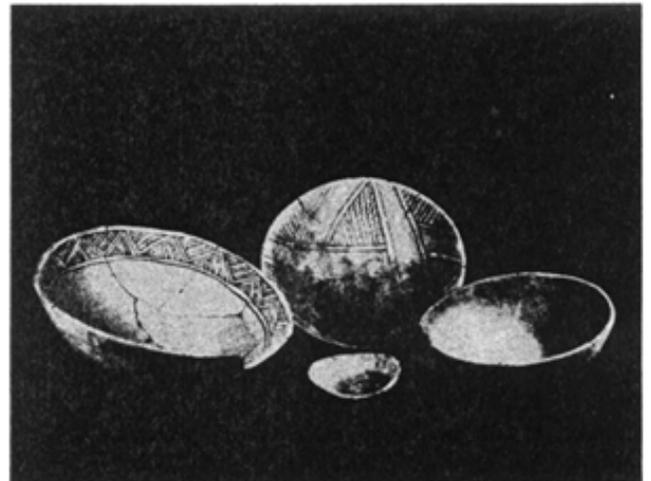
MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME IS RIGHT NOW!

A full year has passed since the first issue of the *AIT* newsletter was distributed. Please take the time right now to renew your membership, for we need and appreciate your support. If you should happen to forget and still want to attend the Romero Ruin tour, we will be glad to process your renewals at that time.

The membership cost is low, but it covers our real costs for the Newsletter. If you have enjoyed the past year, consider upgrading your membership category. For questions call Tom or Jennifer at 622-6663.

POTTERY AND TUCSON'S PAST

The pottery of the Tucson Basin Hohokam represents a long-lived and distinctive artistic tradition that provides us with major insights into a vanished culture. The Hohokam Indians of the Tucson Basin produced both painted and undecorated plainware pottery for at least 1000 years beginning around A.D. 200. Early Tucson Basin decorated wares looked very similar to the ceramics produced in other areas of southern Arizona, but by A.D. 750, a distinctive local tradition had developed. It was characterized by a clay that fired to a brown or gray color, the use of local wash sands as the primary tempering (strengthening) agent, and the use of a range of decorative designs painted in a dark red, iron-based pigment.



Examples of Tucson Basin Hohokam pottery from A.D. 1000-1100. Excavated from the West Branch Site along Mission Road by the Institute for American Research.

The broken pottery pieces, or sherds, and the occasional reconstructible vessel are usually the most common artifacts recovered from Hohokam sites, and they are often the major focus for artifact analyses in the laboratory. Pottery is especially valuable as a dating tool, sometimes dating a deposit to within 30 to 50 years. Sherds can also provide information on the exchange of pottery within the Tucson Basin and on the diverse uses of pottery by prehistoric peoples. This column introduces a series that will focus on Tucson's Hohokam pottery, beginning next issue with an article on the earliest Hohokam pottery.

EXPLORING TUCSON'S PAST

FROM THE ARCHAEOLOGIST'S NOTEBOOK

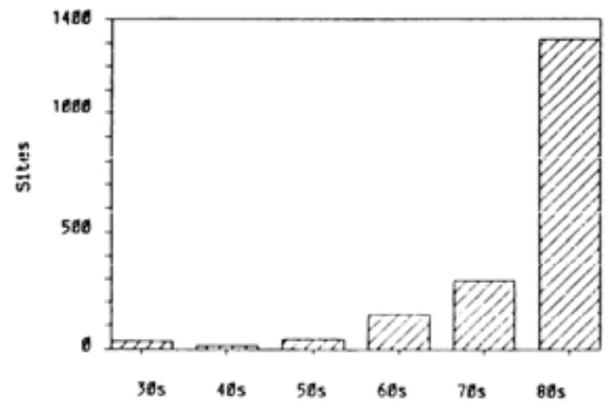
How many archaeological sites are known from the Tucson Basin? What is the total number of sites likely to have existed in the Tucson Basin? How many people lived at each individual site, and what was the total population of the Tucson Basin during different time periods in the past? Each question in this series is important, and each is more difficult to answer than the question before it. Furthermore, archaeological interest increases with the later questions in the list.

This series of questions also serves to illustrate the path of archaeological reasoning. This reasoning goes from the known to the unknown. It goes from the things that we can see, count, analyze, and study in the present—archaeological sites and their contents—and it takes us toward knowledge about people and events of the past. This column is the first in a continuing series that will explore aspects of the history of Tucson Basin archaeology. The purpose of the column will be to explore how a particular discovery, project, or individual helped to advance our understanding of Tucson Basin archaeology.

A logical place to begin is to go back to the question at the top of this column. If we place some slightly arbitrary boundaries around the Tucson Basin, it is possible to say quite precisely that there are some 1850 archaeological sites currently known. That this question can be answered is due largely to the existence of the Arizona State Museum site files. This system of recording archaeological sites on standardized forms and giving them numbers was instituted by Dr. Emil W. Haury in 1938, after he became the second director of the Arizona State Museum. Dr. Haury and his students initiated a very active program of recording sites, but the accompanying graph of the numbers of sites recorded per decade over the past 50 years shows that well over half of the known sites in the Tucson Basin have been recorded since 1980.

It becomes immediately clear why there is great excitement among archaeologists in the Tucson community. Our information base is expanding at a tremendous rate. While many of these sites have already been destroyed, this inventory is a permanent source of information for future research and for current planning to preserve sites.

TUCSON BASIN SITES BY DECADE



TUCSON BEFORE THE HOHOKAM

Early next year the Institute will conduct excavations near the base of A-Mountain for the City of Tucson, work that promises to provide major new insights into pre-Hohokam times. Archaeological research has shown that the Hohokam were highly skilled desert farmers, making use of temporary floodwaters from washes, tapping major rivers to supply extensive irrigation canals, and growing some special crops like agave in large dry-farming systems. New research is proving that the predecessor's of the Hohokam were farmers too.

The Archaic period is the general term used by archaeologists to refer to a long span of time before the Hohokam. Until recently it was believed that during Archaic times people lived in small, mobile groups of 30 to 50 persons and that they survived by hunting and gathering wild plants. However, many new finds show that late in the Archaic period, roughly from 1000 B.C. to A.D. 200, corn became an important part of the diet. Small round pithouses were built and they frequently had sizable pits dug into their floors for storing corn and other foodstuffs. The manufacture of pottery probably began about A.D. 200 in this area. By excavating a large portion of a Late Archaic settlement it will be possible to gain a fuller picture of daily life 2000 to 3000 years ago. Public access to the dig is planned, so we will try to keep you informed.



POT HUNTING

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

1- 800- VANDALS



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

THE AVRA/ALTAR VALLEY VOLUNTEER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

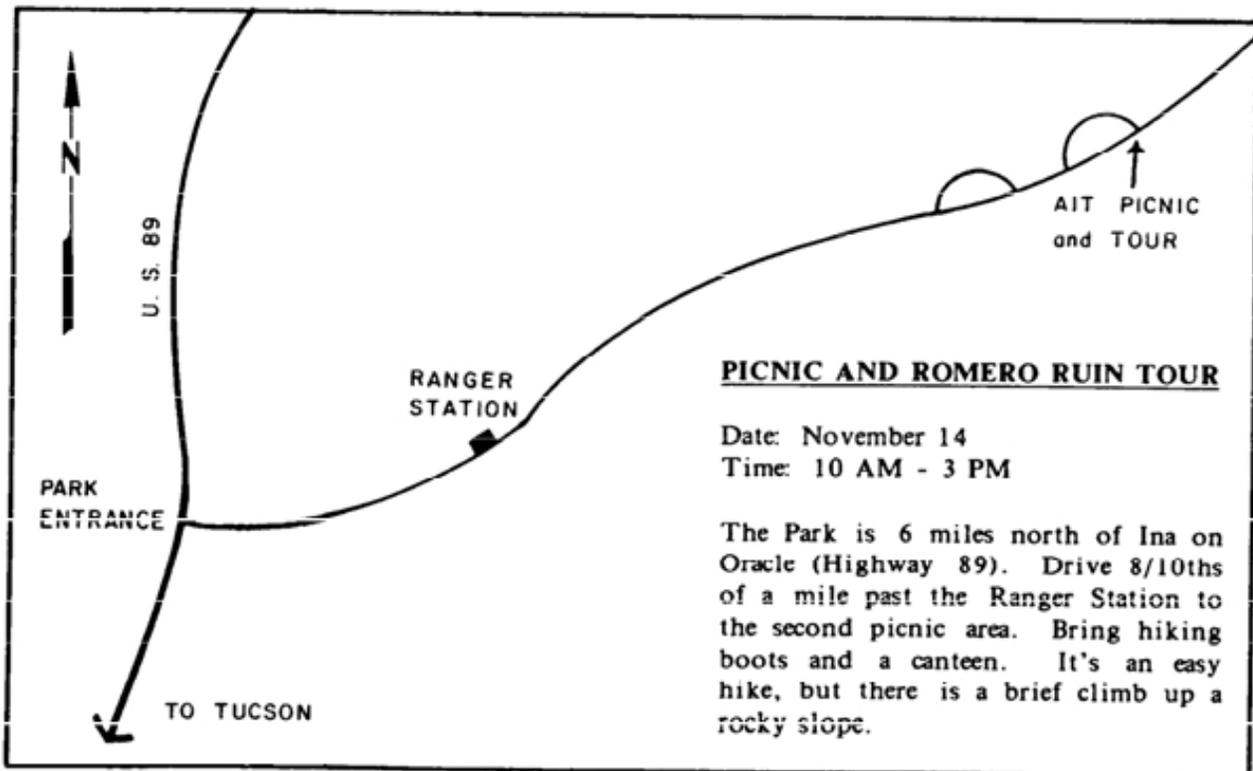
In the last issue of the *Archaeology in Tucson* newsletter we described a new archaeological research project, the Avra/Altar Valley archaeological survey, in which volunteers could help Institute archaeologist Allen Dart discover previously unrecorded archaeological sites near Tucson. The response has been terrific. To date, 28 volunteers have helped to identify archaeological sites in the Altar Valley southwest of Tucson, and all of these folks have expressed an interest in going out on survey again. Nine others have volunteered to go on the search for sites and are scheduled for future weekends. Three people have also volunteered their time to wash and label artifacts and to help type the records for the newly discovered archaeological sites.

As of October 10th, the Avra/Altar Valley surveyors had intensively searched a little over one square mile of land on the northwest side of the Sierrita Mountains. This search has identified 24 previously unrecorded archaeological sites and re-identified one large Hohokam site first recorded

in 1956 by Dr. William A. Wasley of the Arizona State Museum. Several of these sites are large habitation areas with trash mounds, but there are also some smaller sites. Some were apparently used for limited farming and others for collecting and processing the wild plant and animal products that were available near the Sierrita Mountains.

Besides pottery, chipped stone artifacts, and food grinding stones, some less common kinds of artifacts have been found on these sites, including jewelry made from Gulf of California seashells; stone tools used to cut agave plants or process the fibers into thread; ceramic spindle-whorls (fly-wheels placed on sticks used to spin yarn into thread); stone bowl fragments; crystals that may have been used for magical or ceremonial purposes, and projectile points. Most of the artifacts were made by the Hohokam between A.D. 750 and 1450, but a few of the projectile points date to the Archaic period, between 7500 B.C. and the time of Christ. The Avra/Altar Valley survey will continue through the end of the year, at least.

MAP OF CATALINA STATE PARK



INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN RESEARCH



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