

# ARCHAEOLOGY IN TUCSON

Vol. 2, No. 3

Newsletter of the Institute for American Research

Spring 1988

## ARIZONA ARCHAEOLOGY WEEK

The theme of the sixth annual Arizona Archaeology Week is: "Volunteers in Archaeology: Protecting Our Heritage." The Institute has put together an activity program that addresses both elements of this important theme.

### *Volunteer Excavations*

The volunteer program at the site of Los Morteros is already underway. Nearly 30 persons have participated in the fieldwork during the first two weekends of the program, and it is scheduled to continue at least into the month of May. While we cannot expand the number of fieldworkers right now, next month will allow us to add at least a few more persons. So if you missed the first round of the sign-up, give Jennifer a call at 622-6663. There will soon be a need for extra help in the laboratory as well, so keep that option in mind.

### *Site Preservation*

The Valencia Site Fencing Project is coming along admirably. We reached our goal of raising \$250 with ease, and our thanks go out to all of you who contributed to this worthy cause (see page 3 for a list of donors). Special thanks go to the Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society, whose \$50 contribution sent us slightly beyond our target. The "extra" money will go toward signs to be placed around the site.

The good news continues, for the Arizona State Land Department has committed \$1000 to the fencing project, and a request that the City of Tucson match that \$1000 should be considered by the City Council on Monday, March 14. Mayor Volgy is supporting our request, but a telephone call to your Council representative to remind him or her of the importance of supporting this request would be greatly appreciated. The names and telephone numbers of Tucson City Council Members by Ward are provided on page 3.

Finally, Fairfield Communities has moved ahead with their fund raising from the private sector, and all required money should soon be in hand. We plan to begin the fencing project during Archaeology Week if all goes well. We will keep all members informed via a special mailing when the date has been set.

### *Site Tour/pottery Demonstration*

*Archaeology in Tucson* will sponsor a tour of the Romero Ruin to begin our Archaeology Week activities. For those of you who missed the Fall Member's Picnic, this is an opportunity to see the impressive Romero Ruin and to enjoy the beauty of Catalina State Park. Paul and Laurel Thornburg will be present to demonstrate the techniques used by the Hohokam

to make their Red-on-brown pottery. All steps from shaping the pot to painting and firing it will be demonstrated. For those of you who would like to purchase one of the replicas of actual prehistoric pots, there will be a good selection to choose from. Several firings are planned for the afternoon, so you can actually watch your pot being fired and just a little later take it home with you. Don't miss this unique opportunity!

In observance of Archaeology Week, attendance is open to both members and nonmembers. So bring a friend and help us show them the benefits of membership. Cameras and questions are encouraged, and you should bring sturdy walking shoes if you plan to go on the tour of the Romero Ruin.



*Tanque Verde Red-on-brown vessel from the Hodges Site, excavated in the mid 1930s.*

### **TANQUE VERDE RED-ON-BROWN POTTERY**

The painted pottery made by the Tucson Basin Hohokam during the Classic period (A.D. 1150-1400) is called Tanque Verde Red-on-brown. During this same time period, the Hohokam in the Phoenix area gradually ceased to produce Red-on-buff pottery, substituting redware instead. But in the Tucson area the frequency of decorated pottery reaches a maximum during the Classic period. This is just one of the many differences between the Hohokam in the Tucson and Phoenix areas, differences that seem to have grown more pronounced over time. Given the substantial early Classic occupation at Los Morteros, future newsletters will more fully address this important pottery type and time period.

# EXPLORING TUCSON'S PAST

## FROM THE ARCHAEOLOGIST'S NOTEBOOK

Back in 1910 and 1911, a remarkable geographer from Yale University named Ellsworth Huntington visited Tucson and conducted investigations into the issue of climatic change. Huntington focused on the ruins of the Tucson area, the Papagueria west of Tucson, and northern Sonora. He was clearly a pioneer in his interest in these ruins and in his scientific approach to prehistory that was well ahead of its time. His general characterization of the ruins in a 1912 article was: "As sites to be visited by tourists or even as places for the study of primitive art and customs they are unimportant, but as indices of an apparent change in the climatic environment of the southwest, they are worthy of the closest study."

The Archaeology Week events in the Tucson area are evidence of a dramatic change in the perceptions of the value of prehistoric ruins by archaeologists and local residents since Huntington's times, but the key point is Huntington's ability to see a great scientific value in the local ruins at such an early time. This is of particular relevance to the current research at the site of Los Morteros. Huntington visited Los Morteros in 1910, and he provided the following description of the area in the 1912 Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution.

"On the left bank of the dry river bed, between the channel and the base of the jutting point of the Tucson Mountains, Mr. Herbert Brown, editor of the Tucson Star, showed us the remains of a large village. For nearly 2 miles we found pottery and other artifacts scattered along the base of the mountains, not thick as a rule, but at frequent intervals as if houses had been located here and there along the edge of the cultivated land just as we have seen to be the case farther upstream, or as the modern houses of the Papago Indians are located at San Xavier. In the center of the village the pottery is thicker. There we found a great boulder (sic) of andesitic lava almost buried in alluvium. It was studded with 24 rounded holes about 10 inches deep and 3 or 4 in diameter [mortars], while a similar block not far away contained 7 holes of the same sort. Long ago the Hohokam women must have gathered here with their stone pestles, and gossiped as they sat on the great rocks and pounded corn, beans, or other seeds to make flour for the daily bread of their husbands and sons. Not far away an elliptical enclosure of the kind which we have supposed to be a temple or place for religious ceremonials [ballcourt] has a length of 210 feet and a width of 90, dimensions sufficient to indicate a village of considerable size. In the back of the temple and the great grinding stone, if these

are the proper terms, the whole eastern and northern face of the steep rocky hills is covered with low defensive walls, inclosing spaces 10 to 30 feet wide, where families appear to have taken refuge in times of danger. A rough estimate shows that these enclosures number several hundred, which gives some idea of the probable size of the village."

## LOS MORTEROS TESTING RESULTS

The Institute recently completed an archaeological testing program at the Los Morteros site, and the results were impressive. Los Morteros is a large Hohokam village with a large ballcourt. The site was first occupied around A.D. 800 and it continued in existence for another 500 years. The central area of the site where the ballcourt and mortars are located will be preserved through the development of the Los Morteros Regional Archaeological Park. Cooperative efforts by Pima County, the University of Arizona Foundation, American Continental Corporation, and a number of concerned archaeologists have made this preservation process possible.

The northern and southern extensions of the Los Morteros site will be impacted by development, which is the reason for the Institute's current field studies at Los Morteros. The testing has shown the southern portion of the site to date largely to Early and Middle Rincon times (ca. A.D. 950-1100). The northern area is predominantly Tanque Verde phase with some Late Rincon material as well (ca. A.D. 1100-1300).

About 100 houses were documented by our recent testing. During the month of March we will be planning our research and excavation strategy for this site, and in April we hope to be underway with fieldwork. Los Morteros provides an important opportunity to examine interaction between the Hohokam of the Tucson area with the Hohokam of the Phoenix Basin (the Salt and Gila River areas), for we find high frequencies of Phoenix Basin pottery at Los Morteros. In the northern part of the site we have found evidence for an architectural change from pithouses to surface structures with adobe walls. Similar transitions occur throughout southwestern North America, though not at the same time everywhere, and archaeologists are actively working to discover the reasons for and significance of such changes in house form. These are just two of the research questions that will be pursued during the upcoming studies at Los Morteros.



# MEMBERSHIP NEWS

## MORE ARCHAEOLOGY WEEK ACTIVITIES

Some of the local activities planned for Archaeology Week are listed here. Plan to participate in as many as possible.

### Site Tours

March 19—Petroglyph and other sites near Tucson. Departs at 8:30 AM from the south parking lot of Biosciences West at the U of A (N. Fremont and E. Lowell streets on campus). This half-day trip is sponsored by AZ Archaeological and Historical Society. Free. Bring sturdy shoes, water, hat, and snack.

March 20—Romero Ruin tour and pottery making demonstration in Catalina State Park. 1-4 PM. Sponsored by *Archaeology in Tucson*, see page 1 for details. Free.

March 22, 23, 24—Site tour by the Amerind Foundation, which is located in Dragoon, 65 miles east of Tucson. You must call first to make arrangements, for group size is limited. Call Maureen O'Neill at 1-586-3666.

The Amerind Museum has free admission during Archaeology Week, so consider planning a day trip that includes the Museum and a picnic lunch at the adjacent picnic area. Even if you can't make it to the Amerind Museum during Archaeology Week, try to work it in sometime soon. There are many new exhibits for those of you who may have been there in the past. Hours are 10-4 seven days per week, and admission is only \$2.00, \$1.00 for seniors and ages 12 - 18.

### Lectures/Museum Open House

The Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society will present two special lectures, both in Room 301 Biosciences West on the U of A campus.

- March 22 Steven Lekson on "Chaco Canyon: Do We  
March 24 Have the Big Picture?" 7:00 PM. Emory Sekaquaptewa and E. Charles Adams on "Views of Hopi Prehistory." 7:00 PM.
- March 23 Arizona State Museum open house from 4 - 8 PM. See the storage rooms for masks, textiles, and pottery; laboratory facilities; and prehistoric technology demonstrations.

For more information about Archaeology Week activities call Jennifer at 622-6663.

## REPLICAS OF HOHOKAM POTTERY FOR SALE

As we announced in the last newsletter, we now have a selection of pottery made by Paul and Laurel Thornburg for sale at the Institute for American Research. Feel free to drop in between 10-4 Monday through Friday. Call ahead to arrange an alternate time if that is not convenient.

## THANKS TO THE VALENCIA FENCING DONORS

We extend hearty thanks to the following persons and organizations who contributed to the Valencia site fencing effort.

Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society  
Harry Ashby  
Dr. Phyllis C. Barrins  
Robert and Valeria Conforti  
Jesse Devine  
June Harper Doelle  
David Doyel  
Jeffrey Eighmy  
Linda S. Failmezger  
Alan Ferg  
Joanne and Ronald Garry  
Mike and Catherine Honomichl  
Thomas H. Hubbard  
Charlotte Mineburg  
Glynn E. Pickens  
Martha Richardson  
Forrest and Doris Rickard  
Jo A. Ruffcorn  
Paul Saba  
Velma L. Shoemaker  
Betsy Skehan  
Pat H. Stein  
Mrs. Richard Summers  
Laurel and Paul Thornburg  
Russell and Velma Wilde



## CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Please make a brief call and ask your Council Member to support \$1,000 for fencing the Valencia Site. It should be on their March 14 agenda, so call immediately. Thank you for your help.

Ward 1	Mr. Bruce Wheeler	791-4040
Ward 2	Ms. Janet Marcus	791-4687
Ward 3	Mr. George Miller	791-4711
Ward 4	Mr. Roger Sedlmayr	791-3199
Ward 5	Mr. Roy Laos	791-4231
Ward 6	Ms. Sharon Hekman	791-4601



INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN RESEARCH



INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN RESEARCH  
*Archaeology in Tucson*  
245 South Plumer, Suite 14  
Tucson, Arizona 85719