

ARCHAEOLOGY IN TUCSON

Vol. 5, No. 1

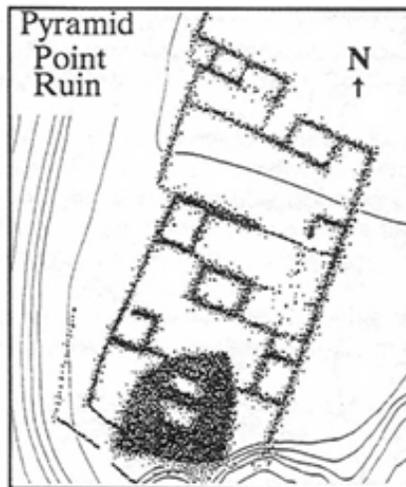
Newsletter of the Center for Desert Archaeology

April 1991

Roosevelt Community Development Study Awarded Major Archaeological Excavations Planned in the Tonto Basin

Desert Archaeology, Inc., the Center for Desert Archaeology's companion firm that conducts contract archaeological research, has just been chosen by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a major archaeological investigation into how and why people who lived in prehistoric pithouse settlements began constructing above-ground houses, walled-in compounds, and platform mounds around AD. 1150. Beginning in May of this year and continuing intermittently into the summer of 1992, Desert Archaeology will conduct excavations in the Tonto Basin, northwest of Globe, Arizona, at the *Meddler Point*, *Pyramid Point*, and *Griffin Wash* archaeological site complexes.

Ancient platform mound communities were grouped into several discrete geographic concentrations in central and southern Arizona (see map on page 2). Most of the ones that archaeologists have recorded are located in the Phoenix and Tonto basins of central Arizona, but three



Pyramid Point platform mound and the rock-walled compound enclosing it (adapted from Scott Wood map).

other concentrations of these communities were located in areas closer to Tucson. At least six platform-mound sites have been identified in the Tucson Basin, including the Marana Mound site where Arizona State Museum archaeologists conducted limited archaeological excavations just last month.

Readers of the past few issues of *Archaeology in Tucson* are also aware of the platform mound sites in the neighboring San Pedro and Altar valleys. As many as nine platform mound communities are now known in the lower San Pedro Valley northeast of Tucson, where since early 1990 avid *AIT* volunteers have been helping to search for even more platform mound sites (see article on page 3). And another five archaeological sites believed to contain platform mounds have been located in the Coyote Mountains archaeological district southwest of Tucson, in the Altar Valley (*AIT* volunteers helped to record those sites during 1989). The upcoming study by Desert Archaeology, Inc., will focus on the Tonto Basin but information about platform mound communities throughout Arizona will be used to provide a more encompassing perspective for interpretation.

The three site complexes to be studied in the upcoming project are all in the north- (Continued on Page 2)

Open House Reminder!

The Center for Desert Archaeology is celebrating our recent move to North Tucson Boulevard with an Open House! Come enjoy light food and drinks, casual conversation, and displays of artifacts and illustrations from recent projects. All *Archaeology in Tucson* members are cordially invited to join us!

Date: April 12, 1991

Time: Friday, 4-7:30 PM

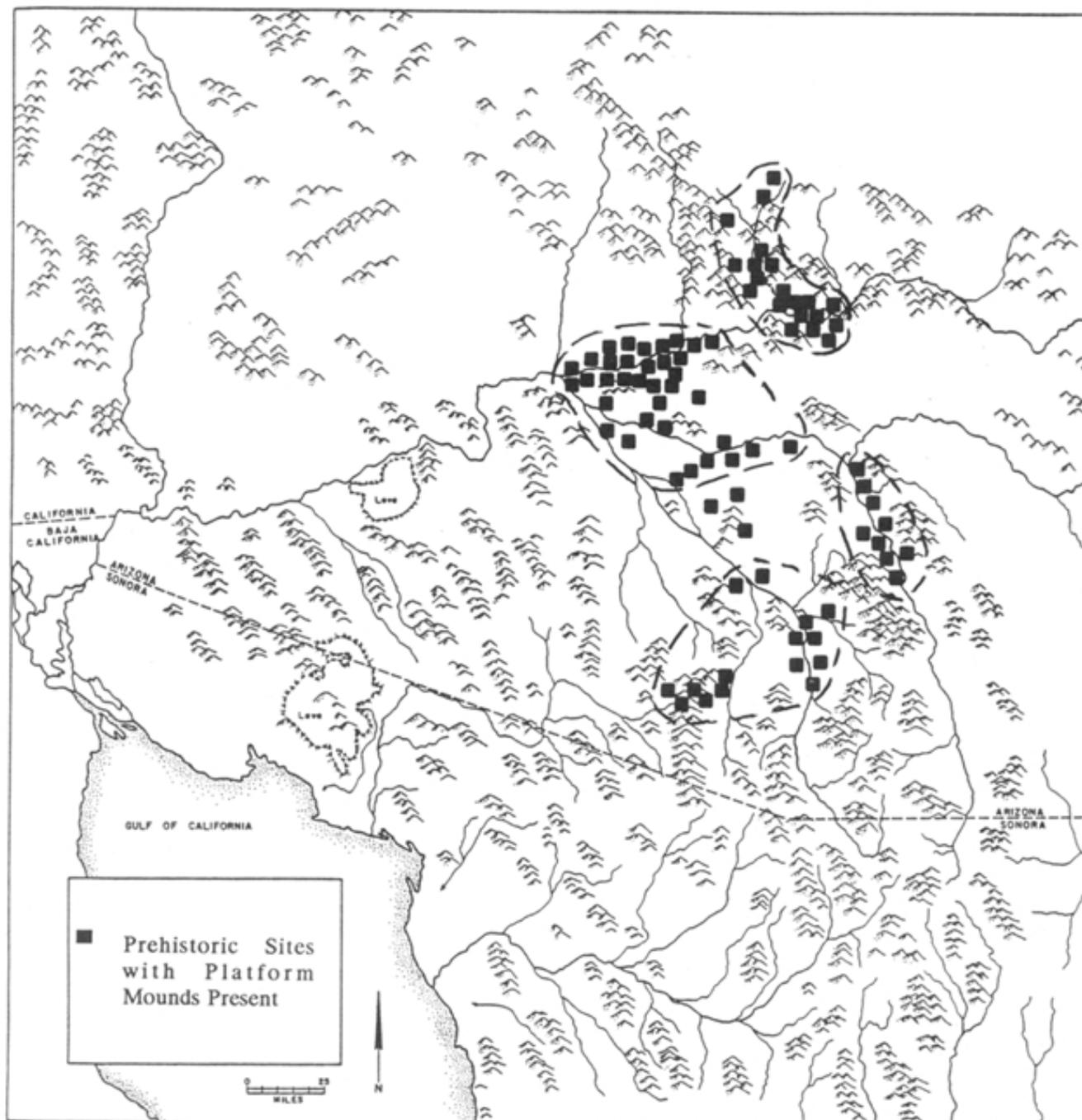
Place: 3975 North Tucson Boulevard

The new Center for Desert Archaeology is on North Tucson Boulevard, about a half-mile north of Prince Road. When you drive north from Prince, we're the very last place on the left, in the big red brick building amidst the surrounding horse properties.

eastern part of the Tonto Basin, on bluffs above the Salt River (the area below the bluffs is now part of Lake Roosevelt). The Meddler Point community may have been founded by the Hohokam as early as AD. 750, and the Pyramid Point and Griffin Wash settlements appear to have been occupied by pithouse-dwelling inhabitants by at least AD. 1150. Some time in the twelfth century the inhabitants of these settlements began to build massive walls to form large housing compounds, and inside the compounds they built above-ground, pueblo-like houses. One compound apiece in the Meddler Point and Pyramid Point settlements, and possibly another at Griffin Wash, include platform mounds. These are earthen structures up to 98 feet across and 10

feet high that were made by building masonry rooms and then filling up the rooms with earth to form flat-topped mounds. Houses are believed to have stood atop the platform mounds. Page 1 shows Pyramid Point's platform mound and the compound and structures around it.

The upcoming Tonto Basin project is important to understanding the archaeology of the Tucson area because this research should help archaeologists determine how long certain platform-mound site complexes were occupied and how and why they grew and declined through time. *(Continued on Page 3)*



The distribution of known Classic Period platform mounds in Arizona. Dashed lines indicate possible social groupings.

Researchers will study evidence for how and why ancient Arizona populations eventually aggregated into communities centered around platform mounds. These communities' use of natural resources through time will be considered, as will continuity and change in platform mound sites' material culture (such as ceramics, stone tools, and architecture). Also, researchers from Desert Archaeology will attempt to identify the exchange spheres that platform mound

communities participated in within southern and central Arizona, and will try to understand how much influence each community had in its various exchange networks. Another important aspect of the research will be to interpret the depositional history of the archaeological deposits to be more certain of what prehistoric activities took place and to determine the true functions of the sites and particular areas within them.

Lower San Pedro Archaeological Survey Continues

Since January 1990, the Center for Desert Archaeology has been conducting a reconnaissance survey in the lower San Pedro Valley to identify previously unrecorded Hohokam/Salado platform-mound communities and locations of protohistoric period Sobaipuri (early O'odham, or Upper Piman) occupation. Since the February *Archaeology in Tucson* newsletter came out, AIT volunteers have been surveying both sides of the San Pedro River in the area from San Manuel on the south to Mammoth on the north, bringing the total number of new archaeological sites discovered and recorded during the project to over 140. The survey results so far confirm that the lower San Pedro Valley saw a complex intermixture of cultures between about AD. 800 and 1450, because traits of both the Mogollon-Western Pueblo tradition and the Hohokam tradition are in evidence together at

many sites. After 1450 there was a dramatic drop in the number of settlements on the terraces overlooking the river, suggesting either a tremendous decrease in population and/or an aggregation of people into fewer villages, but perhaps larger ones.

The Lower San Pedro survey will continue one Saturday and one Sunday per month through May (weather permitting), then after taking a break from the summer heat we expect it to resume in the fall. If you are interested in participating we require only that you be a paid-up member of *Archaeology in Tucson* and that you be in good physical condition (the survey is focusing on terraces that are as much as 200 feet above the river, so access to most survey areas is only by climbing up fairly steep slopes).

If you need more information or want to sign up to survey, call Jennifer at the Center for Desert Archaeology (881-2244).

AIT Members Get Discounts on the Center for Desert Archaeology's Publications

The Center for Desert Archaeology's most recent publications are listed below. *Archaeology in Tucson* members get a 10 percent discount off the prices shown. For mail orders include \$1.75 for shipping for the first volume and \$0.75 for each additional volume.

Technical Report 89-1 \$7.00. *The Gunsight Mountain Archaeological Survey: Archaeological sites in the Northern Sierrita Mountains near the junction of the Altar and Avra Valleys Southwest of Tucson.* Allen Dart. 135 pages, 20 figures, spiral-bound.

Technical Report 89-5 \$10.00. *Archaeological Investigations at Petroglyph Sites in the Painted Rock Reservoir Area Southwestern Arizona.* Henry D. Wallace. 242 pages, 122 figures, perfect-bound.

Technical Report 89-6 \$6.00. *Archaeological Testing at Honey Bee Village (AZ BB:9:88 ASM).* Douglas B. Craig. 76 pages, 20 figures, perfect-bound.

Technical Report 89-8 \$12.00. *Archaeological Investigations at the Redtail Site, AA:12:149 (ASM), in the Northern Tucson Basin.* Mary Bernard-Shaw. 289 pages, 60 figures, perfect-bound.

Technical Report 89-10 \$10.00. *Archaeological Survey in the Painted Rock Reservoir Area, Western Arizona.* Mary Bernard-Shaw. 93 pages, 23 figures, spiral-bound.

Technical Report 90-1 \$12.00. *Archaeological Investigations at the Lonetree Site, AA:12:120 (ASM), in the Northern Tucson Basin.* Mary Bernard-Shaw. 294 pages, 53 figures, perfect-bound.

Technical Report 90-2 \$12.00. *Rincon Phase Seasonal Occupation in the Northern Tucson Basin.* Mary Bernard-Shaw and Frederick W. Huntington. 290 pages, 63 figures, perfect-bound.

Technical Report 90-3 \$10.00. *Ancient Hohokam Communities in Southern Arizona: The Coyote Mountains Archaeological District in Altar Valley.* Allen Dart, James P. Holmlund, and Henry D. Wallace. 134 pages, 23 figures, perfect-bound.

Technical Report 90-6 \$3.50. *A Late Archaic Occupation at AZ AA:12:105 (ASM).* Jonathan Mabry. 21 pages, 11 figures, staple-bound.

Membership Application

Archaeology in Tucson Membership Application

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
Zipcode _____ Telephone _____

Annual Membership Dues Enclosed _____

Annual Membership Rates

Individual	\$10	Corporate Rates:	<u>MAIL TO:</u>
Family	\$15	Active	\$100
Supporting	\$25	Supporting	\$200
Contributing	\$50	Sustaining	\$500
Sustaining	\$100		
Patron	\$500		

Center for Desert Archaeology
245 South Plumer, Suite 14
Tucson, AZ 85719
602-622-6663

Center for Desert Archaeology
300 E. University Blvd., Ste. 230
Tucson, AZ 85705



T-shirt Preview!
Colorful new Desert Archaeology
T-shirts will make their debut at
our Open House on April 12th!
See Page 1 Inside!

The Center for Desert Archaeology

The Center for Desert Archaeology is a nonprofit, research and educational organization that specializes in the study of the archaeology and history of desert regions. Our Primary research focus has been southern Arizona.

Archaeology in Tucson is the membership program of the Center for Desert Archaeology. The *Archaeology in Tucson* Newsletter is published quarterly, and is one of the benefits that members receive. Lectures, site tours, discounts on publications, and participation in archaeological field projects are additional membership benefits. Memberships run for a full year from the time they are received.

Annual Membership Rates

Individual \$10, Family \$15, Supporting \$25, Contributing \$50, Sustaining \$100, Patron \$500.

Corporate Rates: Active \$100, Supporting \$200, Sustaining \$500.