

ARCHAEOLOGY IN TUCSON

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The Naco, Arizona Port of Entry

Archaeology on the Border

By J. Homer Thiel, Desert Archaeology, Inc.

EXPANSION PLANS

With trade increasing between the United States and Mexico, the U.S. Congress in 1988 established the Southwest Border Station Capital Improvement Program to upgrade facilities along the border, including the Naco, Arizona Port of Entry (POE). Naco, Arizona, an unincorporated town of 700 people, is located in Cochise County. Just across the border in Mexico is Naco, Sonora.

The Federal Inspections Service (U.S. Customs and Immigration and Naturalization) requested additional inspection lanes, truck docks, and other improvements for the Naco POE, which was originally built in 1936. More land to the east of the facility was purchased, and DWL Architects & Planners was chosen to design the expansion. However, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 required that archaeological resources on the expansion property be studied before construction began. Desert Archaeology, Inc., was selected to conduct the archival study, survey, and test excavations.



The current Naco, Arizona Port of Entry building was built in 1936.

in 1854 when the U.S. bought southern Arizona from Mexico. Settlement of the area increased, and Arizona became a separate territory from New Mexico in 1863. In 1881, Cochise County was created from eastern Pima County. Mining and ranching were still the best way to earn a living in early Cochise County, a trend that continues today.

The suppression of the Apache, cheaper transportation routes, and new metallurgical processes allowed many gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc

mines to be established in southeastern Arizona. The towns of Bisbee, Tombstone, Douglas, and Benson were all founded around 1880. In 1915, one-sixth of the state's population lived in Cochise County.

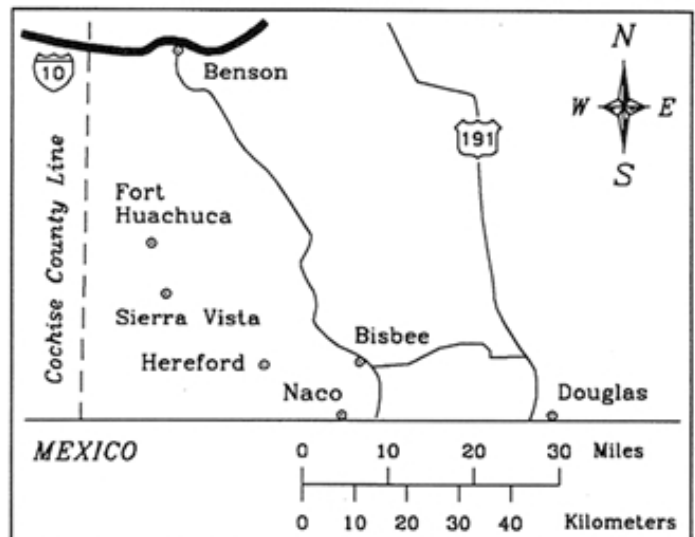
The Arizona Southeastern Railroad line was built almost to the Naco area during 1888 and 1889. In the 1890s, the line was continued across the border to the Mexican town of Cananea, setting the stage for the development of Naco. In 1892, a newspaper reported that a new city was to be built on

SOUTHEASTERN ARIZONA'S PAST

Recorded history of the Naco, Arizona area begins with one of the first Spanish explorers to visit Arizona, Francisco Coronado. He journeyed along the San Pedro River in 1540, leaving no traces of his passage, so his precise route is still debated today. Father Eusebio Kino, a Jesuit priest, was probably the next Spaniard to travel through the area, in the 1690s. The founding of the Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenate, northwest of present-day Naco, was the beginning of Euro-American settlement in the San Pedro River Valley.

The late 1700s and early 1800s saw limited settlement of the Naco area. After all, the inhospitable climate, the difficulty of traveling through the area, and attacks by Apache Indians made southeastern Arizona a challenging place. However, a few brave ranchers and miners were still drawn to the area by grasslands along the rivers, as well as metals and minerals hidden in the ground.

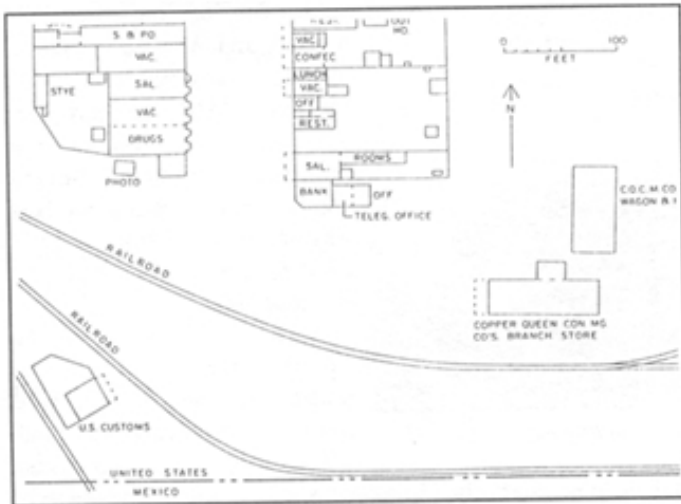
The American period began with the Gadsden Purchase



The Naco, Arizona Port of Entry is located on the international border between the U.S. and Mexico in southeastern Arizona.

the railroad line from Station 30 on the Bisbee railway to Nacoma. The new city was to have an American and Mexican customs house and telecommunications with Bisbee.

Although planned as early as 1892, the town was probably not actually established until 1898, when the Phelps Dodge Company decided to pursue copper-mining operations in Nacozari, Mexico. In the same year, 14 voters were listed in Naco Junction. One source claims that John and Etta Towner were the first residents of Naco. In 1899, the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, headed by an American named William Cornell Green, began operations, and the need for a quicker means of transporting copper ore grew.



Naco, Arizona, was mapped in 1904 by the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company.

GROWTH OF THE TWO NACOS

A railroad track was built to link the mine in Nacozari to mining operations in southern Cochise County, and the twin towns of Naco, Arizona, and Naco, Sonora, grew at the point where the railroad crossed the international border. Naco quickly became a small service center for local residents, still mostly miners and ranchers. In 1899, Naco was reported to have 50 inhabitants, and a post office was opened.

The Mexican government officially moved their Port of Entry to Naco, Sonora, on July 16, 1900. Voter registration



U.S. Army troops guarded the Arizona side of the border during the 1910s (photo courtesy of the University of Arizona Library Special Collections).

lists for 1900 show that the U.S. Customs House also had been moved there. Construction of the Naco-to-Cananea railroad began in 1901, spurring further growth. Congress officially established the POE on June 28, 1902.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Company first mapped the town in the same year. The area covered by the map had about 80 homes and 30 businesses. There were five saloons, two churches, a public school, a confectionery shop, a waterworks, general stores, and the Naco Hotel. The 1910 censustaker found 517 people living in the general area.

THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

The Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910, had a profound effect on the two Nacos. The Mexican government had come into open conflict with rebel groups protesting government policies.

As the fighting spread in northern Sonora, southern Arizonans began to watch the border anxiously. On November 6, 1910, U.S. troops were moved to the border to guard American interests there. Company B of the 18th Infantry, previously stationed at Fort Whipple, was sent to

prevent arms smuggling into Mexico. Many naturalized Mexican residents of Arizona were supporting the rebels since they were often friends and relatives.

The following year saw the first battle in Naco, Sonora, which occurred on May 19, 1911. Two years later, fighting intensified to such a degree that many residents of Naco, Arizona, fled the town. In March and April, the 9th U.S. Cavalry stood watch as bullets fell thickly across the border, and they spent much time keeping excited spectators away from the fighting.

Naco, Sonora, had been held by the federal forces, but it soon fell. The town was devastated, and its residents abandoned it. The fierce battles between the government forces and the



The Naco Hotel advertised in the 1924 Bisbee City Directory.



D Street in Naco, Arizona, looking north circa 1912-1915 (photo courtesy of the University of Arizona Library Special Collections).

rebels practically leveled the town. Finally, after 1915 the fighting decreased, allowing residents of Naco, Arizona, to return to their homes without the fear of bullets smashing through walls. Afterward, the Naco Hotel advertised its "Bullet Proof Rooms."

The battles appear to have disrupted the *During Prohibition, many people parked their cars in Naco, Arizona, and crossed the economy of the region. border to Naco, Sonora (photo courtesy of the Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum).* Railroad routes into

Mexico were cut off, and trade came to a halt as the government and rebels fought for control of the area. Naco, Arizona, suffered as a result. In 1920, there were only 417 residents left in Naco, and the numbers did not increase substantially in later years.

The 1924 Bisbee City Directory lists the businesses that were operating in Naco, including a pharmacy, a grocery, a hotel, a barber shop, and an auto stage. Customs officials and a Mexican counsel were also located in Naco, as was Troop B of the 10th U.S. Cavalry, also known as the Buffalo Soldiers. The Buffalo Soldiers were African-American, and many of their families lived in Naco, Arizona.

PROHIBITION AND BEYOND

During Prohibition, which began in Arizona on the first of January in 1915, Naco, Sonora, experienced an influx of Americans seeking alcohol. Many bars opened, including the Del Monte, the Arizona Club, and the Foreign Club. Other amusements included cabarets and a boxing arena. Photographs suggest that these entertainments were very popular.

Another revolt in 1929 created even more excitement. Naco became the only town in the continental United States to be bombed when an inept pilot dropped four bombs on the town, blowing out windows, demolishing a car, and damaging a boxcar. Not surprisingly, many people again left Naco. Afterward, the town continued to see a gradual decline in the number of residents.



A pitcher dating from 1890 to 1910, was found in a water-main trench

The demise of the railroad in the 1930s and the subsequent growth of nearby communities drew businesses away from Naco. The 1960s and 1970s saw the closure of several nearby copper mines, further harming the local economy. The Naco, Arizona Port of Entry is one of the main economic stimuli for the settlement.



ARCHAEOLOGY ON THE BORDER

In the fall of 1993, an archaeological survey was conducted on the expansion property. During the survey, an archaeologist walked over the surface of the land, seeking any evidence for the prehistoric or historic use of the property. This might have included prehistoric pottery sherds or

pieces of chipped stone, historic turned-purple glass (which dates from 1880 to 1917), rusty nails, or even bullets. Seven archaeological features were visible on the surface, including the ruins of the Copper Queen Store, an adobe-walled com-



Overview of the scraped areas next to the Copper Queen Store ruins.

pound, and a large trash area. The features were found to date from 1900 onward and represented some of the earliest buildings in Naco.

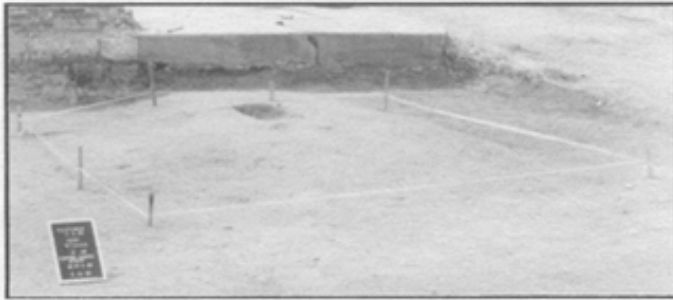
Based on these findings, and on information collected from city directories, maps, newspaper accounts, and other records, the archaeologist suggested that the site might be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register was established by the U.S. government to enhance the preservation of historic sites. A property is eligible for listing in the register if it was the site of important historical events or activities, is associated with well-known people, represents examples of significant architecture, or can provide critical knowledge about prehistory or history. The current Port of Entry is listed because it represents a striking example of the Pueblo Revival style and for its role as a customs house.

A program of archaeological testing was planned for the expansion property to evaluate its eligibility. In the spring of 1994, a group of archaeologists from Desert Archaeology arrived, and a backhoe began to scrape away sediments on the north side of the store.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

A number of features hidden beneath the earth were quickly discovered: holes left where hitching posts once stood; water pipelines; wheel ruts from wagons, automobiles, and a bulldozer (and even a horseshoe print); postholes for a porch and a loading dock, once attached to the Copper Queen Store; and the remains of an adjacent warehouse. The features yielded few artifacts, although an almost complete whiteware pitcher was collected from a water-main trench.

Perhaps most exciting was the discovery of small tent stakes left in place in the ground by the American soldiers who set up tents north of the Copper Queen Store about 1916.



Archaeologists found the holes for two of the army tents. Modern stakes and flagging tape outline one of the tents.

(The photo above depicts these tents in place.) The archaeologists found stakes for two of the three tents, as well as a long trench where soldiers may have hidden when bullets and shells fell from across the border.

Next, three excavation units were placed in the trash dump area. The recovered artifacts included broken dishes, bottles, nails, animal bones, peach pits, nylon stockings, and plastic toothbrushes and combs. The trash was found to date from the mid-1940s to the 1950s and had been deposited by area residents.

Desert Archaeology personnel then used a metal detector to search for ammunition fired during the Mexican revolutions. Several pieces were located, indicating that accounts of bullets falling on the American side of the border were true.



A metal detector was used by Desert Archaeology personnel.



Soldiers were camped next to the Copper Queen Store around 1916 (photo courtesy of the University of Arizona Library Special Collections).

Forty-six features, all dating to the historic period, were described, mapped, and photographed. No prehistoric features, nor artifacts, were encountered, although Naco, Arizona, is well known for an 11,000-year-old Paleoindian mammoth kill site located in nearby Greenbush Draw. (This site was excavated in the 1950s by University of Arizona archaeologists.) However, the expansion property apparently was never the site of such prehistoric activities,

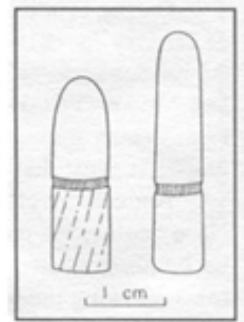
At least none that left physical traces. The go-ahead for construction on the POE expansion property was given once the archaeological resources had been recorded.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The story of the Naco, Arizona Port of Entry unfolds when the archaeological and archival findings are combined. The Copper Queen Store, a brick building with a massive stone foundation, was constructed on the property in 1900, along with its adjacent warehouse. Naco residents came to the store to purchase groceries, hardware, and lumber. It surely was an important place to socialize and trade stories as well.

The nearby El Paso and Southwestern railroad tracks brought freight and passengers from the east and west, many debarking in Naco. The tent stakes are reminders of the tension that filled Naco when internal problems occurred across the border. A slow decline in Naco's economy ensued as many residents fled the area.

The Copper Queen Store closed and was used as a warehouse. An adobe-walled compound was built to protect a firewood-cutting area. In the 1940s, local residents began to dump trash on the east side of the property, prior to the establishment of a local dump. This ended in



Two bullets from the Mexican Revolution.

the 1950s, and by the 1960s firewood was no longer cut in the compound, which was slowly falling to pieces. The Copper Queen Store accidentally burned in the late 1980s, its walls collapsing into piles of bricks.

The property will soon see a new use as the Port of Entry expands. The archaeological and archival studies have identified and documented the remains left by the people who once lived there. This has allowed important information about the historic past of Naco to be preserved for future generations.

Acknowledgments. Archival and archaeological work conducted at the POE was funded by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). GSA and the Interagency Archeological Services Division of the National Park Service evaluated the project. DWL Architects & Planners coordinated the project. Naco, Arizona POE personnel provided valuable assistance during the project.

Southern Arizona Archaeology

Current Events on the Archaeology Scene

Archaeological Research Services, Inc., has completed several surveys for the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) in western and southern Arizona. A survey along U.S. Highway 93 in the Date Creek area northwest of Wickenburg located nine sites, including prehistoric artifact scatters, lithic source areas, several cobble features, and a possible shrine. State Route 95 was surveyed between Bill Williams River and Interstate 40. Thirteen sites were recorded, including lithic scatters, rock rings, sleeping circles, and trails, along with several historic roads. Two other surveys, one along State Route 77 near Oracle Junction and one along U.S. Highway 80 near Apache, turned up prehistoric artifact scatters that are believed to represent trash from pithouse villages. Lastly, a survey for ADOT on the upper margin of the San Simon Valley southwest of Bowie found a series of artifact scatters, roasting pits, rock alignments, rockshelters, and a multicomponent prehistoric/historic campsite.

The Old Pueblo Archaeology Center was incorporated in the State of Arizona in March 1994 as a nonprofit educational and scientific organization. The Center seeks to conduct archaeological and historical research and to provide the public with information about the Southwest's prehistoric, historic, and modern cultural diversity. Another goal is to provide avocational archaeologists and schoolchildren the opportunity to experience research-oriented archaeological excavations. Old Pueblo is also conducting archaeological work. Allen Dart directed archaeological testing in May 1994 at a site, AZ BB:9:280 (ASM), located near the trailhead to Finger Rock canyon. The Old Pueblo staff, assisted by volunteers, excavated test pits, examined six backhoe trenches, and collected a systematic sample of artifacts from the site surface. Chipped stone was abundant, and three Middle Archaic points, one Late Archaic San Pedro point fragment, as well as a Late Archaic Cienega point were recovered from three test units. A fourth unit had a portion of a slab-lined roasting feature with associated chipped stone and plainware pottery. A total of 29 surface features were recorded, including presumably prehistoric bedrock mortars, a small rockshelter containing a four-legged animal pictograph, and some historic checkdams. Data recovery is planned at the site in July. The project is being funded by a Tucson developer, Contra Vest Properties, Inc.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Petroglyph panel near Horseshoe Dam.

Under the direction of Henry D. Wallace, **Desert Archaeology, Inc.**, recorded four petroglyph boulders with 24 design elements at site AZ U:2:78 (ASM) for Statistical Research, Inc. as part of their ongoing work for the Bureau of Reclamation in the Lower Verde Valley near Horseshoe and Bartlett Lakes. Three other moderate-to-large petroglyph sites in the Horseshoe Dam area were also visited to gather comparative data. The designs present at the sites are most similar to those of the Hohokam Petroglyph Style, though several aspects of the sites suggest that they represent something slightly different. The rock art at site AZ U:2:78 co-occurs with a dry fanning system. The designs are thought to function in a ritual setting, though boundary maintenance may also be involved.

Archaeologists from **Desert Archaeology** recently returned to the Roosevelt Lake area to test excavate a small protohistoric Apache component at the Eagle Ridge site (AZ V:5:104/1045). The Eagle Ridge site was primarily occupied during the Early Ceramic Horizon (A.D. 100-600) and the Sedentary period (A.D. 950-1150), and was investigated as part of the Roosevelt Community Development Study, sponsored by the Bureau of Reclamation to mitigate the effects of raising the dam at Roosevelt Lake. The protohistoric component consisted of a very low-density artifact scatter of Apache Plain ceramics, fine-grained lithic debitage, and very expediently made ground stone tools. The artifacts were situated within what appeared to be several discrete activity areas cleared from the surrounding creosote bushes. A surface collection was made, and the activity areas were mapped and excavated. No subsurface features were found, but close to 300 minuscule Apache Plain ceramics (representing at least two different vessels), 30 pieces of ground stone, and over 1,000 pieces of lithic debitage, were recovered. Analysis of this material is now underway.

Discovery of an Early "Big House" at Vacas Muertas

By Jonathan Mabry, Ph.D., Center for Desert Archaeology

During a recent excavation at the site of Vacas Muertas, buried in the floodplain of the Santa Cruz River near the Interstate-10/Miracle Mile interchange, archaeologists from Desert Archaeology, Inc., uncovered what is perhaps the earliest known communal structure built by the ancient peoples of the Southwest. Initial radiocarbon dates, archaeomagnetic assays, and projectile point types indicate that this large preceramic farming village was occupied between 400 and 200 B.C. For its age, both the size of the settlement and its arrangement around a large central structure are unexpected discoveries that provide a new perspective on the organization of early villages in the South-west. This central structure was probably the focal point of the community—among the almost 200 houses and several storehouses that were found, there was only one “big house”.

The foundation of this large pit structure was almost half a meter deep and more than 8.5 meters (28 feet) in diameter. The wattle-and-daub walls enclosed an area of about 54 square meters (581 square feet). A large central posthole surrounded by two rings of postholes, an inner one and an outer one, indicate how the roof was supported. There was no formal entryway, suggesting that it was entered through an opening in the wall or roof, and there were no hearths or deep storage pits inside. The lack of storage facilities set it apart from other, smaller structures, most of which had interior pits for this purpose. Very few artifacts were still in place on the earthen floor of the big house, but three dart



The "Big House" at Vacas Muertas half excavated. Later roasting pits intruding into the house fill are being cleaned out in the remaining western half.

points—two Cienega points (one of obsidian) and a crude Cortaro point—were found in the fill near the floor. From the known timespans of these point types it can be estimated that the structure is about 2000 years old. Radiocarbon and archaeomagnetic dating techniques will provide more precise indications of its age.

First discovered in the 1930s, similar large pit structures have been found to be broadly distributed across the Southwest at prehistoric village sites. Typically, they are round, "bean-shaped," or square pit structures, bigger than those used as houses, and either set apart from the rest of the village, or located at its center. Just such a large "bean-shaped" pit structure was recently found in the eastern Tucson Basin at the Houghton Road site, an early ceramic period village site occupied during the first few centuries A.D., excavated by Statistical Research, Inc. Those found at early villages of the Mogollon culture in the mountains of western New Mexico and eastern Arizona were entered at first through the side, and then later through a sloping or stepped doorway, which usually faced east or southeast. Fitting this pattern, the example at the Houghton Road site had a stepped, east-facing entrance. In the Phoenix Basin—the heartland of the lowland Hohokam culture—some distinctively large, square pit structures of the Pioneer period are thought to have served the same functions, despite their different shape and construction



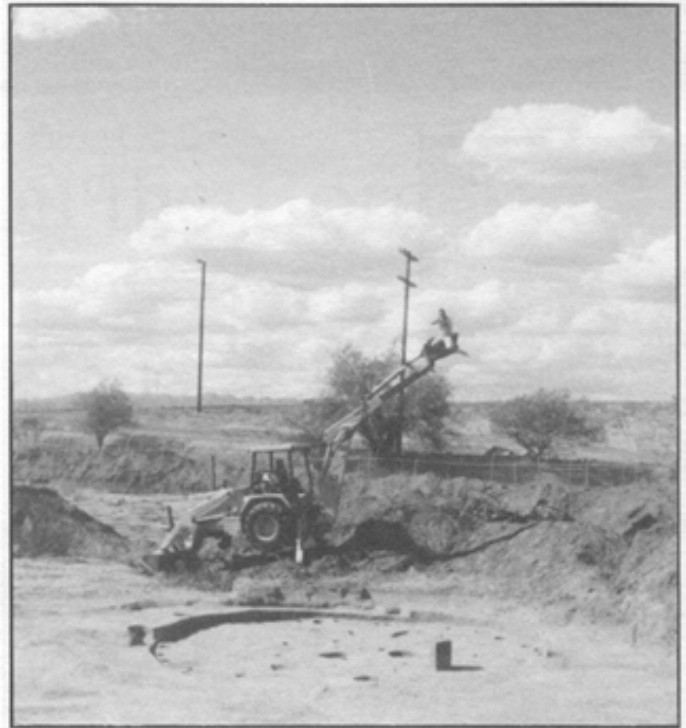
On the floor of the "Big House." Archaeologists search for postholes after the intrusive pits and the fill have been removed.

Archaeologists continue to debate over their likely functions, however. They have been variously called "big houses," "ceremonial rooms," and "community houses," and interpreted either as oversized houses of chiefs, sacred rooms for religious rituals, or communal buildings for village elders to meet about secular matters. Based on their known functions in traditional villages around the world, we can infer that these prehistoric structures were probably "public" buildings where both ritual and secular gatherings were held to integrate the community.

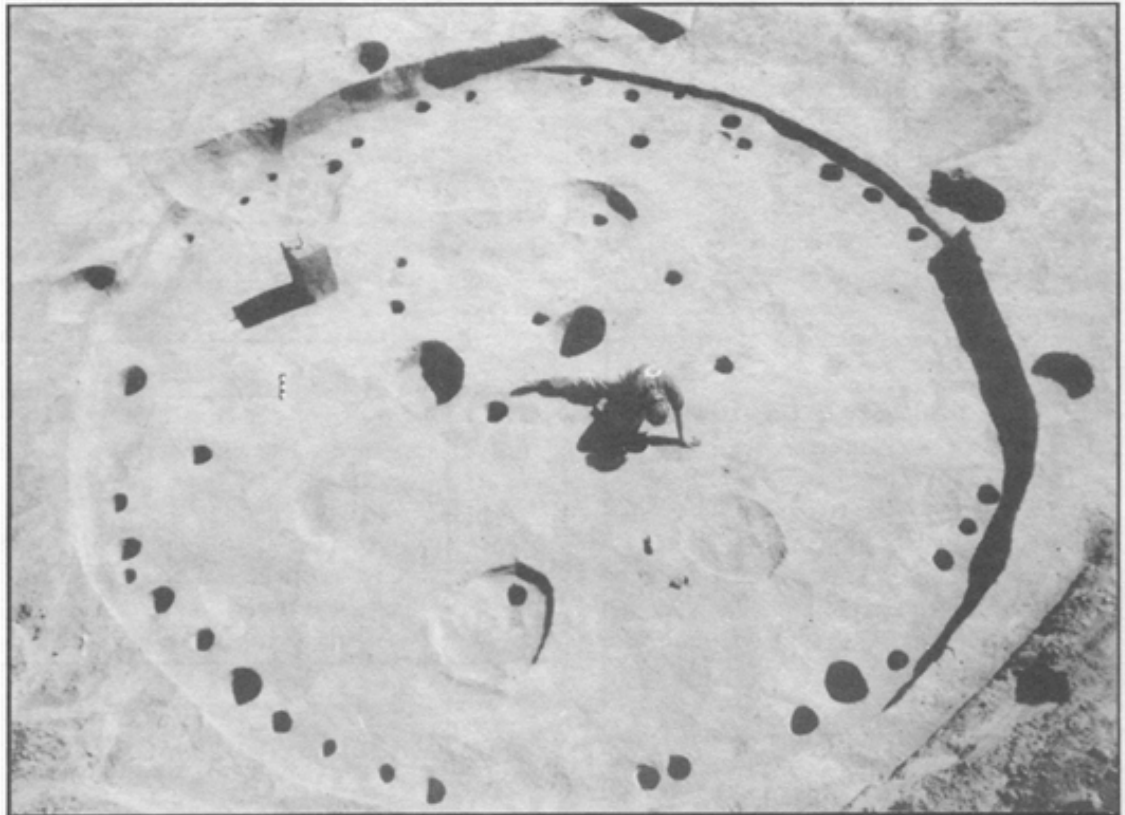
Some Southwestern archaeologists believe that they retained this integrative role as they changed forms over time, and eventually developed into the ceremonial plazas and kivas used today at pueblos in the northern Southwest. The archaeological evidence suggests that, between A.D. 300 and 700 in the Mogollon mountains, they evolved from round to "bean-shaped" to rectangular structures, and steadily increased in size. As the populations of early villages grew, according to this evolutionary model, larger spaces were needed to perform the functions of the communal house, and new forms of public architecture were built. In support of this theory, we know that communal houses disappeared in the Hohokam area about the same time that the first platform mounds (trash mounds capped with caliche) and ballcourts were built about A.D. 800. In the Mogollon area they went out of use when room blocks

of masonry or adobe were built around central plazas beginning about A.D. 1000. In the case of the Hohokam, though, the shift to platform mounds and ballcourts may represent the adoption of new traditions of public architecture from Mesoamerica, where they were already common.

The meaning of these ancient, enigmatic structures will surely continue to be debated. But the 2000-year-old "big house" recently found at Vacas Muertas pushes back in time, by centuries, the previously known sequence of these communal buildings, and expands our knowledge of the social organization of the earliest villages in the Southwest. With this discovery, we are learning that early village life was more complex than we realized.



Photographing the "Big House." For a bird's-eye view, the photographer is raised above the house by the backhoe.



The "Big House" completely excavated. A large central posthole, inner and outer rings of postholes, and shallow floor pits are visible. Cutting into the outer edge and the floor are portions of later pits. The column of earth (left of center) shows the original depth of fill. Elizabeth Martinson, shown cleaning out an inner posthole, provides a scale for this 8.6-meter-diameter structure.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



A fired bullet lies on the original ground surface next to the Copper Queen Store in Naco, Arizona.

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