

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **April 15, 2014**

Destination: **B-Square Ranch**

Leader: **Richard Robinson**

Number of Participants: **14**

On April 15th, fourteen SJBAS members joined with Linda Wheelbarger at the Greeting House of the B-Square Ranch. It took us about 70 minutes to get there from Santa Rosa Park, and we were greeted with a pleasant day with temperatures in the mid 60's. Not too cold, not too warm, not too dry nor too wet with blue skies and light breezes. We were greeted at the gate and escorted around the headquarters by many peacocks, turkeys, geese and some deer.

Linda has given several presentations to our organization several times and escorted us around the ranch at least two previous times in the last 10 years. Among her other achievements, she has been involved with the Dolores Archaeological, the Animas-La Plata, Rifle-San Juan Powerline and Vermejo Park projects. With so many opportunities here, she moved to Farmington in 1981, where she worked in the San Juan College Cultural Resource Management Program. She was also the co-director, along with Meredith Matthews of their contract archaeology office. The preceding opportunities positioned her well to teach the field school and other courses at San Juan College. The combination of her experiences in the area and her ability to ensure enthusiasm in her listeners made Linda the perfect host for our day at B-Square Ranch. Tom Bolack acquired the 12,000-acre ranch located just south of Farmington in 1957. He and now his son, Tommy, have managed this ranch as a wildlife refuge, working farm and ranch, two museums and an archaeological preserve. A dozen P II and P III Ancestral Puebloan sites have been recorded. (Take note, Marlo, one of the museums is an electro-mechanical museum.)

In 1972 the first research and field school was attempted at the Sterling site on this ranch. After many years of varying success, Tommy contacted the San Juan College in 1998 and started the Totah Archaeological Project that included San Juan College and the B-Square Ranch researching this archaeologically rich area and providing a field school for those desiring. Nine ceramic groups have been identified. Totah is a Navajo word that refers to "A Land among the Waters." Farmington is such a place with three rivers, the Animas, La Plata, and San Juan. The B-Square Ranch forms an approximation of a triangle with the long edge encompassing seven miles of the San Juan River. The western end of the long edge includes the confluence with the Animas River and the Eastern edge is near the Gallegos Wash. In other words this area is rich in riparian species and a desirable place for food production particularly in the arid South West. This site was excavated from 1972 to 1974 by Eastern New Mexico University. This site was determined to be a one story great house with 25 rooms that may have been occupied from 950 to 1040 AD. The true size of this site is not known because and a undetermined amount of it was washed into the San Juan River. Red Mesa ceramics has been identified indicating Chacoan heritage.

We visited two areas with petroglyphs, the second Stewart Canyon having seven sites over a half mile was very impressive. There are an usually large number of spirals, animals and anthropomorphs. One of the many interesting

glyphs was "Tlaloc" or "Google Eye" a Mesoamerican god. Around 1970 Howard Smith did his thesis on San Juan Petroglyphs. Most are south facing.

The last two sites that we visited were side by side (less than 1,000 feet from each other) on the San Juan River terrace. The Point site, the location of the much work during the last several years, has produced a lot of interesting information. It appears to be a great house having a great kiva, an enclosed plaza, and an elevated tower. The views from this site are extensive. The nearby Needle dominates the landscape and has two petroglyph panels. A ramp leading to the mesa located above has a large scatter of artifacts along it. The site was occupied from 800 to 1300 AD, but several critics question it being a Chacoan outlier.

The Tommy site was discovered by Tommy in 1987 while constructing catch basins to control run off. The site was covered with one to three meters of sand! This large complex had at least 10 pit structures, several room blocks, four large trash mounds and many pit features. A hundred burials were documented and ceramics indicate late P I to early P III occupation. Points located were small side-notched projectiles made of jasper, chert and San Juan agate. These two sites were rich in artifacts and yielded much interesting information about the area and may indicate Chacoan occupation prior to other large nearby sites.

We stayed beyond our planned 3:00 P.M. departure, thinking that we could wear down Linda, but we had to go after 5:00 P.M. She showed the endurance of a professor who could go on forever about her favorite topic!

- Prepared by: Rich Robinson