

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **March 3 - 7, 2014**

Destination: **Ghost Town Trail in SE Arizona**

Leader: **Gail Schulz**

Number of Participants: **15**

Fifteen SJBAS members enjoyed a warm and pleasant trip on the Ghost Town Trail in southeastern Arizona. Trip leaders Gail and Marlo Schulz took the group to the Patagonia AZ area on the first day. After a quick tour of the Patagonia Museum our first stop was the Marcos de Niza Monument on the Mexican border at Lochiel AZ. De Niza was the first European to enter the land that would become the southwest United States on April 12, 1539. His party, sent to search for the Seven Cities of Gold, was guided by Esteban, the Moorish slave who had been shipwrecked off the Florida coast with his master in 1528. The survivors built makeshift rafts and tried to return to New Spain by following what is now the Gulf Shore of the United States. They were shipwrecked on the Texas coast, and the four survivors were taken captive by local Indians. They were eventually released and spent the next eight years walking across what is today Texas and Northern Mexico, eventually reaching Culiacan, Sinaloa. These four survivors told stories they had heard from the natives of Seven Cities of Gold, which they had not seen.

These stories sparked an immediate interest in finding these Seven Cities of Gold and Fray Marcos de Niza and Esteban were sent to find these golden cities. Esteban was sent ahead to contact the Indians and win their confidence. When Esteban reached Hawikuh near Zuni, NM, he requested food and female companionship as he had done on his eight-year trek back to New Spain. He was quickly killed by a shower of arrows. Others of his party hurried back to find de Niza who promptly retreated to New Spain. During his retreat de Niza imagined Hawikuh as an immensely rich city larger than Mexico City with gold, silver and ten-story buildings. His stories sparked a gold-crazed frenzy and resulted in Francisco Vasquez de Coronado's large expedition in 1540 to find these riches. Fray Marcos de Niza served as his guide. Of course the riches de Niza had described did not exist and each group of Indians they met sent them on with stories of riches to be found farther away with other Indians. De Niza returned to Mexico City in shame in 1541.

Our next stop was the Lochiel AZ schoolhouse and grounds that are undergoing restoration and preservation by the Patagonia Museum. The restoration was the dream of Elena Quiroga who attended school there from 1939 to 1948. Her son German Quiroga, President of the Board of Trustees of the Patagonia Museum has worked with over 100 volunteers to make her dream a reality. The Lochiel schoolhouse was built prior to 1905 and was used until 1973. The Lochiel/La Noria school district may have existed as far back as the 1880's. The town of Lochiel has been called Luttrell, La Noria and finally Lochiel and has had post offices under these names. The town was founded in the 1880's and abandoned in 1986. A busy US/Mexico border crossing was located there until the mid 1980s. Mines and ranches in the beautiful San Rafael Valley supported the town. Pancho Villa frequented the area and drove stolen cattle across the border into Mexico. Lochiel had two mills that served three mines in the area that produced silver and lead, several saloons, a bakery, several stores, a stable and butcher shop. About 400 residents lived in Lochiel.

We then drove through the beautiful San Rafael Valley that consists of some of the last and best examples of the Arizona grasslands ecosystem. "Oklahoma" was filmed in this valley. We drove by the 9,000-square foot San Rafael Ranch House located not far from Lochiel. This house was used in the John Wayne film "McClintock". A beautiful weathervane graced this ranch for the movie. That weathervane is now being made by an AZ company and they have donated one to the ranch for mounting on the house. The State of AZ now owns the ranch and hopes to restore it and offer tours to the public again as funds permit. The buildings are currently deemed not safe for public entry and no public facilities are located on the site. We hope to tour this historic ranch on a future trip. Our next destination was the ghost town of Harshaw. This was another mining and ranching town of about the same period as Lochiel. Only one building remains partially standing.

The Harshaw Cemetery is the most interesting part of the ghost town. This cemetery has been used since the 1880s, and holds some recent burials. Harshaw once boasted a population of around 2,000 and had a mile long main street with many businesses. The cemetery contains the graves of many members of the Soto family. What makes the cemetery so interesting is that the Soto family has assisted in posting a history of many of the occupants of the cemetery on the graves. The graves, which are located on a very rocky, rugged hillside, are lovingly maintained and are covered with many bright flower arrangements, stuffed animals on children's graves, angels and other items of meaning for the families. We finished the day with a quick trip to Paton's Birder Haven in Patagonia for a little bird watching.

The next day we went on the Ghost Town Trail outside of Tombstone to visit the ghost towns of Gleeson, Courtland and Pearce. Gleeson was part of the Turquoise Mining District in the 1880s and the original name of the town was Turquoise. Ancient turquoise mines were found in the area in the 1850s. These mines were used by Indian and Spanish miners for centuries. The mines were reopened and the fine greenish stone led Tiffany's of New York to contract for these stones for decades. Tiffany's eventually bought the claims and operated them as demand dictated. Copper was the main commodity mined here and in Courtland, as well as some incidental silver and gold. The Pearce mines were rich producers of silver and gold.

We toured the beautifully restored Gleeson Jail and Museum with Tina Miller who owned the jail until Feb 14, 2014, when it was sold to Joe Bono, a long-time Gleeson resident who intends to keep it available for tours. The jail, built in 1910, contains a wealth of information on the mines, the ranches, the town and people who lived there. We visited the first Gleeson jail, a huge oak tree in a wash with the cable that held the leg iron chains still imbedded in the tree trunk. We walked through the town site located below the mines on the hills above, to view the ruins of the very large school, the general store, other smaller stores and the adobe ruins of a large hospital which had a resident surgeon whose skills were frequently needed to help injured miners. We moved on to Soldiers Hole several miles east of Gleeson in the Sulphur Springs Valley. This was one of the few dependable sources of water for miles and was used by Indians, Spanish and U.S. soldiers and later Mormon settlers. A mill was constructed there and water was also piped to the Courtland Mining District. We visited some ruins in Courtland and stopped at the ruins of the Courtland jail which was constructed in 1911 and is an exact copy of the Gleeson jail. Concrete sidewalks remain from the Courtland Main Street.

We visited Pearce and saw the mines on the hillside behind the town, the Pearce jail built in 1915, the old post office and large general store. Many pieces of mining equipment and machinery are on display near the general store. Pearce was a one company town organized by the Commonwealth Mine and did not suffer the booms and busts many mining towns endured. About 500 to 600 people occupied Pearce at its peak.

We drove on to the middle of the Sulphur Springs Valley to visit the site of the springs that gave the valley its name. The waters proved to be unhealthy for drinking and the Indian Agency which was once located there had to be relocated when many people became ill. We climbed the rocky hill above the springs to view bedrock metates ringing the entire hill and its summit. These numerous metates are the deep post-hole type and were full of water from much needed rain from the previous week. We finished our day with a stop at Whitewater Draw to view the numerous Sandhill cranes, Snow geese and ducks wintering there. We were treated to the sight of a Great Horned owl in her nesting box high in the rafters of the hay barn near the parking lot. On our third day, we visited the San Pedro House on the San Pedro River to view flocks of Pyrrhuloxia, also known as the Desert Cardinal, yellow-headed black birds, various woodpeckers and smaller birds.

We then visited the wonderful Amerind Museum at Dragoon, Arizona. The museum features displays of cultural items from many tribes and from Paquime in Chihuahua, Mexico. Charles di Peso conducted the excavations of Paquime in the 1950's and the museum features many of the items discovered in that excavation. The newest exhibit is of Pottery Revivals. This exhibit features modern potters who have revived old pottery methods of manufacture and styles from Hopi, Santa Clara, Mata Ortiz and others. The modern pottery is displayed with the ancient pottery on which it is based. We also visited the Fulton-Hayden Art Museum next door to view changing exhibits of beautiful Native American, southwestern and western paintings and sculptures.

- Prepared by Gail Schulz