

SAN JUAN BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chapter of Colorado Archaeological Society



FIELD TRIP REPORT

Date: **September 25-26, 2016**

Destination: **Mesa Verde Backcountry**

Leader: **Rhonda Raffo**

Number of Participants: **10**

On Sunday, September 25th, part of the group hiked the Petroglyph Trail, which was enjoyed by all despite the “strenuous” rating of the hike. We saw some cliff dwellings along the trail and enjoyed the thought-provoking petroglyph panel. Most of the group stayed at the Far View Lodge that evening and rewarded ourselves with a lovely dinner at the Metate Room.

On Monday, our first of two ranger-led Backcountry Hikes was to Oak Tree House. Our ranger, Jeff Brown, shared his wonderful knowledge about the site and its inhabitants. On our hike in, we passed Mummy House, where the mummy of a 12-year-old boy was found.

Oak Tree House was expanded over a period of years, and Jeff pointed out one sign that helped the archeologists determine this. He said T-shaped doors, which typically opened to a plaza, would be closed in with stones and mortar, and the space used for storage. Once he pointed out the outline of where the original door was, it was easy to see it had been closed in. Oak Tree House has six Kivas; Kiva D was originally built as a square, but was modified to a round structure.

He also pointed out walls that had two colors of plaster; the upper color was a light tan representing Father Sky and the lower color was a darker brown representing Mother Earth. Some of the items found at the site included crystalized salt, turquoise, a hammer stone, sandals that were never worn and various figurines, indicating wide ranging trade since there are no salt or turquoise mines in the area.

After lunch at the Far View Terrace Café, we drove to Wetherill Mesa to begin our Mug House tour. Along the trail we came across the unexcavated Painted Cave site. There was a horizontal red zig-zag line pictograph, which typically depicts a snake. A zig-zag line with a 45-degree angle or vertical orientation often depicts lightening. One member of the tour thought zig-zag lines could also depict mountains, but Jeff said mountains are usually drawn as triangles.

Mug House presents three styles of kivas, from Mesa Verde, Chaco, and Zia. Some of the artifacts found at Mug House were a hammer stone, sandals that were never worn, and blade fragments which were likely from a knife used to butcher deer. Jeff said that the bow and arrow was probably an intellectual trade item, versus a physical trade item, that came into use by 600 - 800 A.D.

- By Rhonda Raffo

Participants: John Edens, Sue Fischer and Andy Butler, Kristine Johnson, Jay Culver, Michael Mohr, Rusty Chamberlain, Lyle Hancock, and Rhonda Raffo and Jim Mueller.