

# San Juan Basin Archaeological Society



## Field Trip Report

Destination: Taos Exploration

Date: May 1 – 3, 2019

Leader(s): Barb and Lyle Hancock

Number of Participants: 13

On Wednesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, our group of thirteen SJBAS members met for lunch at the Abiquiu Inn in Abiquiu, New Mexico. Then we headed to the Wells Petroglyph Preserve where we did a guided tour of the Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project (MPPP). The preserve is located near the Rio Grande River about 40 miles southwest of Taos. In 1992 Katherine Wells and her partner purchased 188 acres on Mesa Prieta. She was already a self-described "petroglyph junkie," and the thousands of petroglyphs she found astonished her. Realizing that they needed protection, she founded the MPPP in 1999. Neither Katherine nor anyone else knew that the mesa would turn out to be the largest petroglyph site in New Mexico with an estimated 100,000 images representing Archaic Period hunters and gatherers, the Pueblo people, and the Spanish. MPPP has three goals: to record the petroglyphs, to educate the public, and to protect and preserve this important cultural legacy. In 2007 she gave most of the property to the Archaeological Conservancy which works in concert with MPPP. It is now known as the Wells Petroglyph Preserve. Our group split into two groups lead by volunteer docents, Cathy Benthagan and Lenny Lucey. All the petroglyphs were etched on basalt boulders that had tumbled off the mesa caprock. After our 2+-hour tour, we continued to Taos, stopped at the Visitor Center, checked in to our lodging, and got together for a group dinner at the popular Gorge Bar and Grill on the plaza.



On Thursday, we spent the day in Taos. We had some free time in the morning to wander about Taos and see a few sites on the Self-Guided Walking Tour. Then we met at the Millicent Rogers Museum. Our two-hour docent-led tour at the museum was a highlight of the trip:

<https://millicentrogers.org/pages/about-the-museum>.

After lunch, we visited the Kit Carson Home and Museum and the Harwood Museum of Art. The Kit Carson home, still standing in its original footprint, was built circa 1825 and purchased by Kit Carson as a wedding gift for his third wife, Maria Josefa Jaramillo, a member of a prominent Taos family. The territorial style adobe building was to be their home for the next twenty-five years. Seven of their eight children were born and raised in the home, along with several Native American children who had been freed from captivity by the Carson's.



After the death of Josefa Carson on April 27, 1868 and Kit Carson shortly after on May 23, 1868, the home changed ownership six times before it was purchased in 1911 by the Grand Masonic Lodge of New Mexico to be maintained as a memorial in perpetuity to Freemason Kit Carson. In 1949, the Kit Carson Memorial Fund was formed in order to officially maintain and operate the buildings as a historic home and museum. In 1963 the Kit Carson Home and Museum was designated as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service.



Then most of us toured the elegant Harwood Museum of Art. What can I say, there were

some unique and unusual pieces. Later we drove a few miles to Ranchos de Taos, visited the San Francisco de Asis Mission, enjoyed happy hour at the historic Old Martina's Hall, and then had a group dinner at the adjacent Ranchos Plaza Grill.

On Friday morning, everyone was on their own to finish seeing sites in Taos, including the E.L. Blumenschein Home and Museum, Kit Carson Cemetery and gravesite, and the grounds of the Mabel Dodge Luhan House, now a historic inn and conference center.



The E.L. Blumenschein Home and Museum is maintained much as it was when the artist and his family were alive. The home is filled with a superb collection of the Blumenschein family's art, a representative sampling of works by other famous

Taos artists, fine European and Spanish Colonial style antiques, and the family's lifetime of personal possessions. The home beautifully illustrates the lifestyle of Taos artists in the first half of the twentieth century.

At 11:00 a.m. we rendezvoused at the historic 21-room La Hacienda de los Martinez and took a self-guided tour. Built in 1804, this restored hacienda is one of the few remaining late Spanish Colonial period "great houses" in northern New Mexico. It is located at the northern terminus of El Camino Real, connecting northern New Mexico to Mexico City. The Hacienda is on the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the Park Service. Touring the Hacienda was another highlight of the trip. The Hacienda's twenty-one rooms surrounding two courtyards provide the visitor with a rare glimpse of the rugged frontier life and times of the early 1800s.



After lunch we attended the Santa Cruz Feast Day at the Taos Pueblo <https://youtu.be/Sp7szY1HVK>. The main parts of the present pueblo buildings were most likely constructed between 1000 and 1450 A.D. These buildings appeared much as they do today when the first Spanish explorers arrived in Northern New Mexico in 1540 and believed that the Pueblo was one of the fabled golden cities of Cibola. The two structures called

Hlauuma (north house) and Hlaukwima (south house) are of similar age. They are considered to be the oldest continuously inhabited communities in the USA. Approximately 150 people live within the Pueblo full time. Other families own homes in the Pueblo but live in summer homes near their fields and in more modern homes on other Pueblo lands. There are over 1900 Taos Indians living on Taos Pueblo lands.

After we waited about an hour, a group of approximately 40 dancers, mostly young women wearing brightly colored long dresses with colorful sashes and white moccasins, appeared in front of Saint Jerome Chapel and danced to the beat of a drum played by an older man and gourd rattles wielded by two young men. The dancers moved through the pueblo followed by other tribal members and the public, doing several dances in different locations. After each dance an elder spoke for a few minutes in his native Tiwa language and the audience responded with a group "Humm." Most of our group drove home on Highway 64 over the spectacular Rio Grande Gorge suspension bridge and through the Carson National Forest.

Participants: Joan and Byron Kellogg, Michelle and Mark McKibben, Paula Lutz, Cathy and Jim Callahan, Nancy and Reg Leach, Lydine and Tom Hannula, and Barb and Lyle Hancock

- by Lyle Hancock