



# New Mexico Archaeology

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

November 2014

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Eric Blinman Ph.D, Director OAS*

I'm writing this with the knowledge that I have yet again violated Jessica's trust in me in her role as editor. My deadline for producing this column was last week, but in the press of responsibility and opportunity there's been no time until now. In some senses, my procrastination has been fortunate, since the week has been intense and reorienting, and Jessica's patience is just one of many reminders of how fortunate we all are to have each other.

The Friends of Archaeology and OAS both work, and probably work so well together, because there is an underlying passion for and commitment to the subject matter and potential of archaeology. This attitude leads to effort above and beyond any reasonable expectation from both staff and volunteers.

Jessica and her volunteers have put up with a lot of stress caused by the rest of us in their journey to produce each of the newsletters, and the results are easy to both appreciate and take for granted. Sheri worked hard, with only inconsistent support from me, to pull together the logistics of the wonderfully successful Canyon of the Ancients tour. Chuck, eligible for retirement long ago, continues to work on education outreach and back logged reports, and when called on he will pinch hit on urgent field projects. Don stepped in as a new volunteer, rejuvenating all of our arrows "just in time" for the open house. Mary and Isaac come in from a grueling week of field work and immediately drive down to El Camino Real Historic Site for an education program. Marvin and John bring the expertise of their scientific careers to our dating labs, tinkering their way to dramatic improvements not just to OAS operations but to the discipline of archaeology. Mollie blends knowledge, experience, and passion to build a whole new curriculum dimension to our education program. Linda shows up with a container of biscochitos in time for the open house.

I could fill the newsletter with examples of contribution and commitment, but the point is that we should all take a moment to recognize each other and ourselves for making this adventure happen. We can be clumsy and even testy at times, but what we have accomplished and are accomplishing is truly remarkable.

THANK YOU! And have a great holiday season!

--Eric

## POTTERY ON THE WEB

Office of Archaeological Studies is delighted to announce the launch of a new research tool and valuable addition to our website. The Pottery Typology Project, created by C. Dean Wilson is an online compendium of the Native pottery of New Mexico found in archaeological context.



Why is a pottery typology on line important? Since the inception of Southwest Archaeology in the nineteenth century, pottery description and classification has been a linchpin data source on most archaeological sites in the Southwest. Before carbon 14 dating, pottery analysis was the foundation for some of the earliest chronological studies and provided the basis for systematic classification systems that evolved in the 1920s and 1930s. These classifications were used to define culture areas in time and space across the Southwest. Today, pottery analysis conducted by an experienced specialist on an assemblage from controlled context can often provide archaeologists with basic information about the site including cultural association, date, trade relationships, and in some later historic assemblages, clues to socio-economic status.

What does the Pottery Typology do? The Pottery Typology Project provides an online catalogue of ceramic types organized in a framework based on a hybrid of other classification systems. The Pottery Typology Project provides visitors with an outline for classification, detailed descriptions of over 300 ceramic types, time range

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## POTTERY ON THE WEB (CONTINUED)

for the type, references, and pictures. The site also solicits input and questions from users.

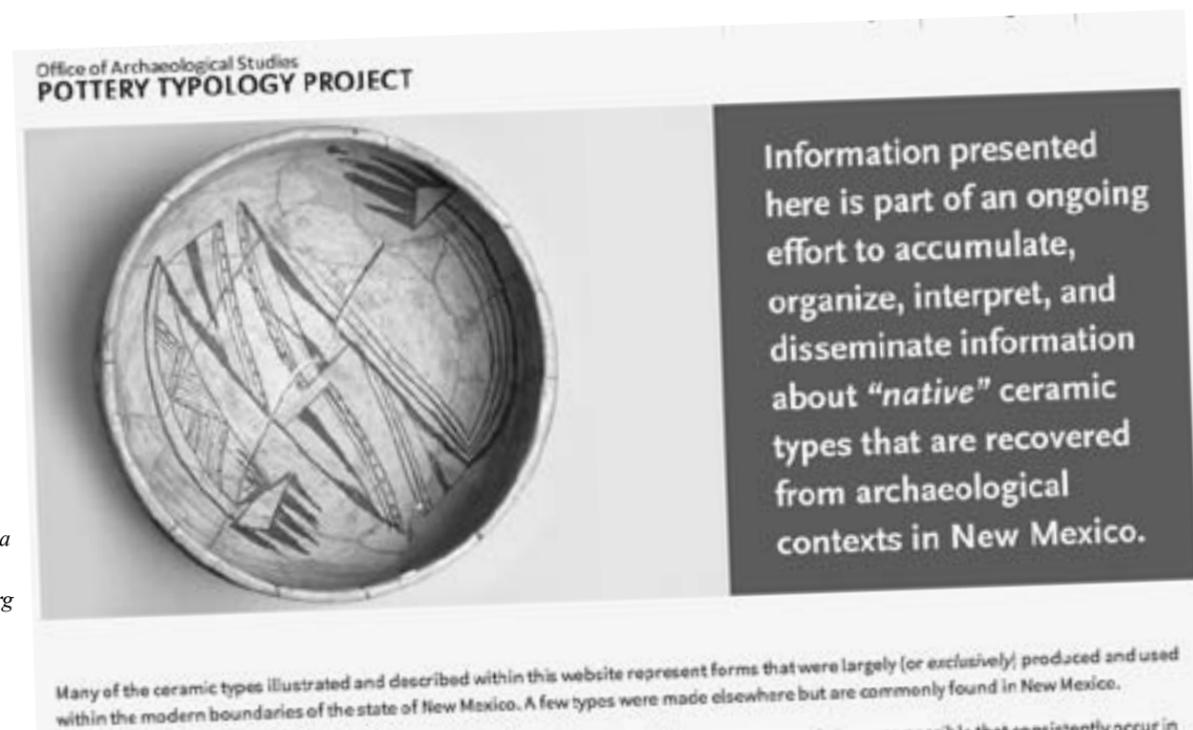
When archaeologists talk about a ceramic “type” we refer to the most basic classification for any specific item. The recognition of a particular type based on surface attributes is dependent on the determination of the area of origin or associated tradition based on paste (clay) and the “ware” the technological tradition used to produce the pot. Types are given geographic names based on the general area where the first examples of that type were identified and then to an associated ware group reflecting the overall form and surface finish. So pottery names reflect the vessel’s geographic origin and technology used to make it, for instance, Santa Fe Black-on-white.

The Pottery Typology Project’s framework places ceramic “types” into categories for three nested geographical units which from the broadest defined to the narrowest include culture area, branch, and tradition. The system used for the project is not distinct; the combination of terminology and criteria to define the units is borrowed from other Southwestern ceramic classification systems. Culture areas most commonly refer to very broadly defined groupings for which the associated sequence of occupation is related to a very distinct combination of traits or material culture. The most basic division employed involves the distinction of archaeological manifestations indicative of groups that seem to have been directly related to modern Pueblo groups and those which were not. Areas occupied by groups that in some way appear to have been related to historic Pueblo people were somewhat arbitrarily divided into three

culture areas based on broad similarities between material traits and cultural patterns associated with groups who seem to have long-occupied different geographic provinces. The three included within a broadly defined Ancestral Pueblo group are the Greater Mogollon, Greater Upper Rio Grande Valley, and the Southern Colorado Plateau (Anasazi). The rare incidences in New Mexico of ceramics associated with cultures that are unrelated to Pueblo groups are mostly the result of late migrations by nomadic groups from areas outside the Southwest into landscapes that had been completely abandoned by Pueblo groups sometime before AD 1300. Examples of such late manifestations include Numic or Uto-Aztecan groups arriving from the Great Basin.

“Branch” refers to broad combinations of material culture with distinct traits within a larger culture area. Ceramics from a particular “tradition” are subsets of a “branch”. A tradition refers to the smallest area for which pottery associated with different sequences can be consistently grouped.

The database, which is accessible on the OAS website ([www.nmarchaeology.org](http://www.nmarchaeology.org)) is the culmination of a 25 year career in archaeology and pottery analysis. The website was created after about a year and a half of effort by Dean Wilson and Dough Pankin, supported by Museum of Indian Arts and Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology staff and numerous volunteers (including Carol Price, Mimi Burling, Kathy McRee, Daisy Levine, and Pat Klock) and reviewers. It remains a work in progress focused on continuing research. The project was also made possible by support from the New Mexico Department of Transportation. ❖



Access the Southwest Pottery Typology Project via [nmarchaeology.org](http://nmarchaeology.org) or at [ceramics.nmarchaeology.org](http://ceramics.nmarchaeology.org)

## A MONUMENT TO PERSEVERANCE

Reggie N. Wiseman OAS Project Director Emeritus and Research Associate

In the summers of 1968 and 1969, I assisted Jack (John P.) Wilson of the Museum of New Mexico in his excavations at Fort Sumner preparatory to its inauguration as a state monument. Although our official work was to focus on the exposure of an infantry barracks, we naturally wondered about Navajo and Mescalero home sites, where they might be, and what they might look like. After all, several thousand Navajos and about 500 Mescaleros had been interned at Bosque Redondo for several years back in the 1860s.

At every turn, however, we learned that no such sites had been identified, either within the bosque itself or on the gravel terraces around the periphery of the bosque. About the only stories that consistently were heard concerned skeletons in unmarked graves that had been unearthed back when the various tracts of land within the bosque were leveled for modern farming. I remember one story involving a group of about six individuals that had been dug up. The thing that identified some of these skeletons as Native American was one or more that had wire bracelets around the lower arm bones.

Then one day, while in the grocery store in Fort Sumner, we were talking to a fellow about our work at the fort and the fact that we had been unable to find any evidence, other than hear-say, of the internees. Anyway, he began telling us the story of the pieces of a pottery vessel that he had found over a period of years around the “yard” of the old homestead that he had lived in as a kid. As I remember, the man was probably in his forties, so it had not been all that many years before our conversation. As a kid, and later as a young adult visiting the by then abandoned dwelling, he occasionally noticed, and collected, potsherds here and there from among a few cop-pice dunes located immediately east of his house. At some point,

the man decided to work with the sherds to see if he could get them to fit back together, and they did! The house was, and is still, located near Fort Sumner.

So, Jack and I arranged to see both the property and the pot. Expecting to see a prehistoric pot, we were very much surprised to find that it is a mostly complete Navajo Utility jar! I took a picture of it propped up on a fence post (a railroad tie) at the homestead. I dutifully catalogued the negative in my personal negative collection, had a print made, and tucked both away. Unfortunately, at the time I took the photograph, I did not have a scale to put beside the vessel to show its size. However, after the image was photo-shopped and enlarged to basically fill up the space on a sheet of 8.5 by 11 inch copy paper (with one-inch margins), the resulting size of the image is the approximate size of the pot itself.



The vessel is a characteristic shape for a Navajo jar. The body bears light scrape marks; a single fillet of spaced, low-relief nodes encircles the vessel immediately below the lip; and the vessel wall below the rim is very thin and even. The color of the body is a medium dark brownish-gray.

Over the years, I occasionally ran across the print of the picture in my scrap books. Then one recent day, I asked one of our graphic artists here at the Center for New Mexico Archaeology, Scott Jaquith, if he could digitize the image and remove the background and the fencepost, leaving the pot as a simple, clear image. And, he could and did!

Unfortunately, I do not remember the name of the man who made the find, nor do I know the current whereabouts of the pot. ❖

## 2014 Annual Holiday Party *and* Celebration of Archaeology

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 16th HOTEL SANTA FE 3 to 6 pm, 1501 Paseo de Peralta  
 Tickets to the event are \$20 - includes admission, a savory light buffet, and a drink.  
 Call (505)982-7799, ext. 5 or purchase your ticket at the door.



As we hiked in Lion Canyon, Ute Mountain Ute Reservation, we passed several cliff dwellings, well preserved considering their age.



Despite massive falling boulders many of these ancient structures have survived.



At the far end of the trail we were able to enter the Lion House Cliff dwelling.



Our Ute guide explains the ancient petroglyphs.



Archived drinking cup, Anasazi Heritage Museum.



Partially restored pottery, Anasazi Heritage Museum.



This small pool, in the Hovenweep National Monument has provided water for humans and wildlife for hundreds of years.

## BASKET WEAVING 101

The artifact wash lab at CNMA smells of sumac, while knives and ice picks litter the table instead of the usual scrub brushes. Throughout the fall Lynette Etsitty, Eric Blinman, and volunteer Judy Graham have been scoping out likely bushes and making contact with landscaping crews and property managers in order to bring in a good harvest. Lynette, OAS' laboratory coordinator and the daughter of a rug weaver, started learning Navajo coiled basketry about five years ago in a New Mexico Arts apprenticeship with Peggy Black, noted expert in the traditional craft. Now she has been commissioned to construct a replica basket by Aztec Ruins National Monument for a planned Museum exhibit. The original basket is an 800 year-old fragment from the Four Corners area. The replica will be constructed with the same techniques and materials as the original, and it will give the museum visitor a chance to see what the basket would have looked like before the ravages of time took their toll.

The process of making a basket starts with material selection. The weaver needs to find fresh sumac shoots that are healthy and undamaged. The shoots have to be a single season's growth, and a beautiful stand can be destroyed in minutes if a chance hail storm bruises the plants. Long shoots are the most versatile for coiled basketry, yielding both foundation rods and sewing splints. Once shoots are harvested, the leaves and outer bark are stripped from the now white shoots, and a knife is used to split the stem three ways. Each third is then thinned by removing the interior pulp and isolating a thin flexible strip of the exterior cambium. In the case of the replica basket, the foundation is made of two unsplit side-by-side rods of sumac with a narrow leaf yucca strip nestled on top. The flat strip of yucca forms the exterior coil element, creating a uniform leading edge upon which to add the next coil. Stitches are inserted through and around the yucca strip by inserting an ice pick and guiding the weaving material through. The process takes time, a fair amount of finger strength, and the help of Crisco or lard to help grease the weaving material. The replica will be a shallow bowl shape, about nine inches in diameter, and it will represent more than 20 feet of coiling effort. ❖



## WATER CANYON AND SOCORRO

*By Sheri Spaar FOA board member and trip participant*

Late this spring, a small but very enthusiastic FOA group gathered for a special opportunity to visit and learn about the Paleoindian sites of Lemitar Shelter (9020 BP- CE 1250+), Black Canyon rhyolite quarry and the impressive Water Canyon area (both dating from at least 11,000 years BP). Led by Robert Dello-Russo, former Deputy Director of OAS, and currently Director of the Office of Contract Archaeology, Maxwell Museum, UNM, the group functioned like a seminar - full of questions, observations, and Dr. Dello-Russo's intimate knowledge gleaned from many years of camping, hiking and excavating in the area.

Driving the winding, washboard side roads north of Socorro, on the approach to San Lorenzo Canyon and Lemitar Shelter, our first stop on Friday was the overlook of an "angular unconformity," a rare geologic feature protruding out of the sand wash like a kilometers long sculpture placed to enhance the nondescript landscape.

Proceeding up the canyon, Dr. Dello-Russo pointed out many features, including a small roadside shelter which had been partially excavated, and where we noted numerous surface finds, particularly of bone.

Deeper in the canyon, the steep climb to the wide, shallow Lemitar ("squaw bush") overhang was worth the effort. While we ate our sack lunches, Dr. Dello-Russo provided us with a thorough overview of the various excavations. Most cultural deposits at Lemitar date from the Pueblo III period, but "the level of organic preservation is high and excavations have recovered sandals, snares and other items not found in open sites" (Dr. Dello-Russo).

Back in Socorro, we stopped briefly at the Energetic Minerals Research and Testing Center to individually sign-in and obtain our "permission slip" for passing onto their land to access the Water Canyon site on Saturday. A heavily secured operation, this group tests weaponry and explosives for many contractees, including the U.S. Government. The Water Canyon site, so important for so many reasons, sits on their land, and the archaeologists have to work within a strict perimeter of barbed-wire fencing, which cuts off significant portions of the ancient site.

We had the rest of the afternoon to enjoy the wonderful Mineral Museum on the NM Tech campus. A true treasure-trove

## REGION PALEOINDIAN SITES

of southwest and world gems and minerals, including fossils and mining artifacts, this small Museum ranks as one of New Mexico's "must-sees". After a short respite at the motel, we met in a special room for a delicious dinner at the Bodega restaurant, followed by an illustrated talk by Dr. Dello-Russo on the next-day's activities at the quarry and Water Canyon.

An early morning start on Saturday gave us ample time at each site, both of which lie west/southwest of Socorro. The Black Canyon quarry is a massive hill comprised almost entirely of dark red rhyolite, which was utilized for tool and weapon-making from the Clovis period. A cool breeze and clear air greeted us as we took almost two hours to walk to the top of the hill and back, stopping to examine numerous specimens of rock which showed evidence of having been chipped or flaked. At various vantage points, Dr. Dello-Russo pointed out far-distant geophysical features, especially to the east and south, which marked both animal and human migration routes in the area. It was a lesson in earth changes over eons in the entire southern New Mexico terrain. We found it hard to tear ourselves away from the site and views, even though Water Canyon, an altogether different, but exciting, adventure awaited us just down the road to the west.

Access to the large Paleoindian bison-kill site is not obvious, and one is surprised to emerge on the excavations, which straddle two arroyos that drained into a large ancient lake bed and marsh. The geology is quite complicated, since old arroyos sliced the site differently than the extant ones. This leads to speculation about just how large the site may have been over thousands of years, and where likely remains might still be discovered. Many disciplines are involved in "reconstructing" such a site, and Dr. Dello-Russo and other experts have painstakingly pieced together much of the story after careful excavation, deliberation and analysis from past and recent work. After scrambling down into one of the arroyos to find some shade for lunch, we spent a fascinating afternoon viewing elements of the landscape. We discussed how the excavation loci have revealed at least two bison-kill events, and define the site as the only one west of the Pecos River with at least two late Paleoindian -- one Folsom, and one Clovis -- temporal components.

Many thanks to Ann Noble for planning the details; and Dr. Dello-Russo, who though no longer affiliated with FOA, gave his time and knowledge. Dr. Dello-Russo made the trip educational and fun with his local anecdotes and sense of humor. ❖

### Office of Archaeological Studies

The Office of Archaeological Studies (OAS) was the first museum program of its kind in the United States. Its staff conducts international field and laboratory research, offers educational opportunities for school groups and civic organizations and works to preserve, protect and interpret New Mexico's prehistoric and historic sites.

If you would like to know more about OAS, please see our Weblink:  
www.nmarchaeology.org

### Friends of Archaeology

The Friends of Archaeology is a support group of the Museum of New Mexico Foundation for the Museum of New Mexico, Office of Archaeological Studies.

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Friends of Archaeology is to support the Office of Archaeological Studies in the achievement of its archaeological services mandate from the state of New Mexico by participation in and funding of research and education.

### Friends of Archaeology Board

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Treasurer: Linda Mowbray

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Lynette Etsitty and Judy Graham