

The Archaeological Curation Crisis in Arizona

In November 2006, the Curation Subcommittee of the Governor's Archaeology Advisory Commission (GAAC) issued a report entitled *The Archaeological Curation Crisis in Arizona: Analysis and Possible Solutions*. GAAC is a statutory body that advises the Governor and the State Historic Preservation Office on archaeological issues. The report documented a lack of adequate space and funding for the curation of archaeological objects and records in the state of Arizona.

This crisis did not come about over night. Beginning in the 1970's, archaeologists recognized what has come to be called the *curation crisis*. As residential and commercial development have increased over time, the amount of archaeological materials grew as well as the result of the required fieldwork prior to development. This fieldwork outpaced the funding and space available for curation.

Studies done to address this crisis pointed out that it was not the availability of space itself that was so much the problem as the quality of available space in terms of safety, security, environmental

and insect control, and access for researchers and the public. One contributor to the study noted: "For nearly 30 years, reports on the status of archaeological curation have highlighted the lack of storage space. The problem is still with us and is worsening." The study noted that every time in the past 30 years that professionals have met on this topic the same themes emerge: space, funding and managing collection growth.



But solutions are available. The San Diego area's archaeological community responded to their curation crisis in 1998 by founding the private, non-profit, San Diego Archaeological Center. This institution was set up to receive and curate collections. The Center currently meets all federal and state standards for archaeological curation. It is the goal of the Verde Valley Archaeology Center to achieve a similar result.

Our Mission: To Protect the Cultural Heritage of the Verde Valley

The inspiration to form the Verde Valley Archaeology Center came, in part, from the above description of the curation crisis in Arizona. However, on a more self-serving level, the prime motivator was the realization that over the past 100 years, EVERY archaeological artifact excavated from the Verde Valley has been removed, never to be seen by any current or future resident. Items removed from the Verde Valley are housed in the Smithsonian Institution, the Arizona State Museum, Museum of Northern Arizona, Sharlot Hall Museum and others.

This transfer of our heritage continues today. Each time an excavation is performed by a contract archaeological firm prior to property development the recovered artifacts are sent out of the area because there is no accredited curation facility in the Verde Valley. There are also an unknown number of private collections in the hands of local landowners that were acquired many years ago from their property that could add to the prehistory knowledge of the region.

The possibility for a researcher or the public to view these items is extremely remote. From a strictly scientific standpoint,

this dispersal of Verde Valley cultural material makes it difficult to conclusively document trade, migration and other processes in the lives of the inhabitants. These important items are not available for modern techniques of data recovery and analysis in order to understand human adaptation in the region.

The Verde Valley Archaeology Center is dedicated to working throughout the Verde Valley region to:

- ▶ Preserve and enhance prehistoric cultural sites and artifacts of the Verde Valley
- ▶ Encourage the public to get involved in Verde Valley archaeology
- ▶ Develop methodology to visually share and explain our prehistoric culture
- ▶ Promote archaeological heritage tourism
- ▶ Work toward the creation of a curation facility to catalogue, study and preserve artifact collections from within the Verde Valley





*an Arizona nonprofit corporation
and 501(c)(3) public charity*

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*The mission of the Verde Valley
Archaeology Center is to preserve
archaeological sites
and collections and to promote their
educational, scientific and cultural use*

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President's Report

by Dr. James Graceffa

2010 was a short year for the Center, but much was accomplished from October to the present. We were able to obtain our 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the IRS, which officially made us a non-profit organization. By-laws for the Center were drawn up and adopted, a Board of Directors and Board of Trustees were elected and a website was established. A possible physical site has identified and a contractor and architect are presently pursuing a workable plan as we begin looking for grants.

Our Board of Advisors include representatives from the Coconino National Forest, the Yavapai-Apache Nation, the Hopi Nation, the National Park Service, Yavapai College and EnviroSystems Management, a contract archaeology firm. They will have input in the creation, implementation and execution of policies and activities that broadly effect our archaeological research, education and stewardship in the Verde Valley. All have pledged support for the Center.

In fact, Kathy Davis, Superintendent of Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot national monuments, has given the Center several surplus bookcases, storage cases, a brochure rack, computer rack and has released on permanent loan, historic display cases made in the 1930's by the CCC for Tuzigoot. We are thankful to Kathy and the National Park Service for this generous assistance. In addition, Yavapai College has made two classrooms available for our use to conduct laboratory analysis of artifacts for the Coconino National Forest and the Museum of Northern Arizona. The archaeologist at Tuzigoot National Monument has recently sought our help on a similar project. This underscores our usefulness in assisting the archaeology community in general and the need for our organization in the Verde Valley.

The Town of Camp Verde is enthusiastically behind the Center and is doing everything in its power to help in any way possible. I am thankfully amazed at the curiosity about the Verde Valley Archaeology Center. All of the Board members have had individuals come up to them and ask how they can get involved. Volunteers are the backbone of any non-profit organization and we are no exception. We will be openly enlisting your help in the near future and we hope you will step up and be generous with your time and resources.

We are reaching out to the other communities in the Verde Valley, because we think we can mutually benefit each other in the preservation of our cultural heritage, and to promote archaeological tourism in the area.

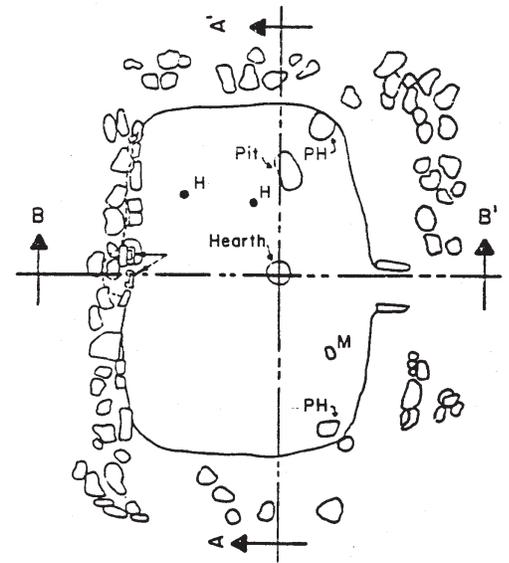
We look forward to an exciting 2011. As I mentioned previously, a possible location for the Center has been identified. Included in the Center would be an auditorium with state of the art audio/visual equipment, an interactive children's discovery room, exhibit area, research lab, library, gift shop and storage area. We have an aggressive speakers schedule set up for 2011. These talks will be held at different venues throughout the Verde Valley. We are working with the Forest Service for permission to conduct hiking field seminars to several archaeological sites in the southern half of the Verde Valley. Our first hikes will take place in March to help celebrate Arizona's Archaeology Awareness Month.

Our Board of Directors have worked extremely hard getting the Center to this point and they continue to work for your interests. Our goal is that the Center will be the "go to place" for archaeology in the Verde Valley. Thanks to all our members for supporting us, and I encourage others with interest in helping to preserve our cultural heritage to become members and become involved in some of our activities.



ABSTRACT

During the summer of 1982, the Museum of Northern Arizona, under the direction of Carl D. Halbirt, excavated a Sinagua site that was part of a land exchange that eventually became part of the Sedona Golf Resort. The site was occupied within the period A.D. 1050 to A.D. 1100. It was a Sinagua agricultural field system composed of a residential unit and a series of stone alignments, probably field borders or check dams. The procurement of plant resources appears to have been a principal activity, with no plant type relied upon exclusively; both domesticates and nondomesticates were important. It was concluded that the stone alignments involved a considerable amount of labor investment to construct, yet the agricultural area incorporated was too small to support the caloric needs of an individual for a year. The site was probably a field house with adjoining fields, utilized by a household group. Adjacent areas needed to be exploited for both wild resources and arable land to meet the group's caloric needs. The site was named the "Volunteer Site" because of the involvement of several volunteer members of the Arizona Archaeological Society.



A "SMALL" AGRICULTURAL SITE

This site was seen as representing a "small site," that is, a site whose size and artifacts suggest a limited occupation by a small group of people, gathered at the locality to carry out a specific seasonal set of activities. This site would have been occupied between times of planting and harvesting. The importance of investigating small sites is necessary to understand prehistoric adaptive systems.

The site was found near the base of House Mountain, on the east-facing slope. Although no permanent water source was noted near the site, it was suggested that Jacks Canyon may have been a permanent prehistoric water source since scattered riparian species were noted along its course. Water would also have been available as runoff from House Mountain during the monsoon season.

As part of the excavation, three test pits were sunk, one inside (shown in the diagram) to determine the floor level and two on the outside of the structure. All fill was then removed from within the structure. The structure was a well-defined rectangular masonry structure measuring about 18 feet by 14 feet. This structure was later found to contain an inner pit house measuring 14 feet by 10 feet. The structure contained a circular hearth, two post holes ("PH" in the diagram), a metate ("M") and two hammerstones ("H"). Numerous pottery pieces of jars and bowls were also found.

Over 30 stone alignments were observed within the site area, ranging from 16 feet to 65 feet in length. In some cases the alignments were connected, forming possible grid borders. These were constructed by haphazardly stacking basalt cobbles and boulders no more than 3 stones high or wide. It was determined that these alignments served to increase available agricultural land by removing stones which impeded root growth. They also served to reduce soil erosion, and retain runoff during heavy rains.

Most pottery sherds recovered were plainware classified as Tuzigoot Brown and Verde Brown, with other types representing less than 2% of the total. Most of the sherds found in the room were of bowls, while outside the room were an equal mix of bowls and jars.

One of the primary concerns was the recovery of plant resources. Pollen and floatation analyses were recovered. Recovered plant remains included corn, squash, yucca, prickly pear, berries (manzanita, juniper and grape), beeweed and curcubita. In total, eleven different plant types were recorded as economic resources.

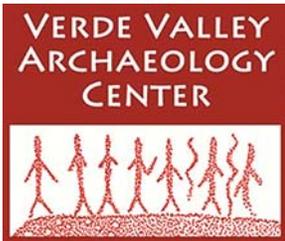
CONCLUSION

Plant procurement was seen as the principal exploitation strategy at the site. No particular plant resource was exploited exclusively based on the presence of 11 different plant types. This suggests a late spring through fall occupation for the site to take advantage of the native plants as well as domesticates.

Ceramic vessel form analysis suggests that inside the room bowls were used for cooking and preparation with some storage of plant remains. Outside the room, jars were used for collection of plants.

The study concluded that this was a seasonal base camp used as a residential unit during the agricultural season.

*Future issues will highlight similar little known archaeological sites in the Verde Valley. When the **Members Only** section of the website is completed in the coming weeks, the archaeological research report of the highlighted site will be available.*



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Coming Events



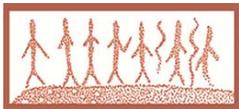
Archaeology Awareness Month Activities

Saturday/Sunday, March 12/13, V Bar V Days

Saturday, March 19, Sacred Mountain Field Seminar

Saturday, March 26, Wingfield Mesa Field Seminar

Field Seminars are hikes lead by experts in the area that provide a healthy trek and a learning experience. Details are available on our website.



Become a member or make a donation and help us protect the cultural heritage of the Verde Valley

Membership Categories and Dues

- Student \$10
- Supporting \$35
- Contributing \$50
- Sustaining \$100
- Sponsor \$250
- Life \$350
- Patron \$500
- Additional donation . . . \$ _____

Business Memberships are available.
Visit our website for more information.

VERY IMPORTANT

Members frequently receive information about archaeological sites that are considered sensitive and protected. By submitting this application, you agree to adhere to all objectives of the Center and the Antiquity Laws of Arizona and the United States especially the objective that discourages "exploitation of archaeological resources" particularly for direct or indirect personal gain or recognition.

Please mail your application and check to:

Verde Valley Archaeology Center, Inc.
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or visit www.verdevalleyarchaeology.org to join online

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Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Thank you!

