

ARCHAEOLOGY IN TUCSON

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Newsletter of the Center for Desert Archaeology

February 1991

Digging at the Romero Ruin

Progress Report on the Recent Testing Project

We Have Moved!

The inevitable chaos of moving almost overwhelmed us at the end of 1990, but it has slowly dissipated during January. Now we are enjoying a fresh new view of the Catalinas and savoring the quiet of our new rural setting within modern Tucson. Coyotes, hawks, and horses are now our nearest neighbors. Gone is the constant roar of the jets on the Davis-Monthan flight path and fighting the suicide lanes on Broadway. And on top of that, our available work space has almost doubled. After seven years on South Plumer, we have moved to new quarters at the far north end of Tucson Boulevard.

To celebrate our survival and to welcome our many friends and colleagues to our new office, please plan to attend our open house on April 12, 4-7:30 PM. This will be an opportunity to see photos and artifacts from many recent projects and to talk over the significance of the results with the project archaeologists.

Open House

Come join us at our new office for light food, drinks and an opportunity for casual conversation. See artifacts and photos from recent projects. All Archaeology in Tucson members are cordially invited, so mark your calendars now.

Date: April 12, 1991

Time: Friday, 4-7:30 PM

At

3975 North Tucson Boulevard

Directions: Go north on Tucson Boulevard about one half mile past Prince. We are the very last place on the left. A large red brick building amidst horse properties, we are next to impossible to miss.

A grant from the State Historic Preservation Office, a contract with Coronado National Forest, and a substantial contribution by *Archaeology in Tucson* volunteers have made possible an important testing project at the Romero Ruin in Catalina State Park. Deborah Swartz led the field team from the Center. The goal of the testing was to provide information for the planned interpretive trail that is being developed cooperatively by the Forest Service, Catalina State Park, and the Center for Desert Archaeology. Some project highlights are briefly summarized.



Early view showing the mass of fallen rocks that was exposed along the compound wall at the Romero Ruin.

The Compound Wall

A major goal of the testing was to explore the wall that enclosed the Classic period settlement at Romero. The fallen remains of the wall were clearly visible on the surface of the site. The major problem faced by the field team was the huge number of fallen rocks that were encountered as soon as clearing was begun around the wall.

The first photograph shows how densely scattered these rocks were. Fortunately, the careful removal of the fallen rocks revealed the base of the wall still largely intact and clearly visible in the second photograph. We had noted previously that the compound wall was not a simple set of straight lines that always met at right angles. However, the degree of this serendipity was brought

home when we found that the wall turned in the exact opposite direction of what we had anticipated. It now appears that there may have been a special alcove at the southwestern corner of the compound. We were not able to expose the entire corner during this phase of the project, so the exact nature of this area is not yet known.



Later view after the fallen rocks were removed to reveal the base of the compound wall.

An Early Redware Horizon

In the recent Center publication on the Lonetree site, Mary Bernard-Shaw and Jim Heidke defined an early ceramic horizon for the Tucson Basin that was characterized by a distinctive redware pottery in addition to plain ceramics. At the Lonetree site a series of radiocarbon dates established that most of the houses associated with this pottery type had been occupied around AD. 550.

When the pottery excavated from the large trash mound at Romero was analyzed recently by Henry Wallace, it was immediately apparent that the lowest layer of the deposit was almost exclusively plainwares and redwares. The presence of early ceramics was not a surprise, but the large quantity represented suggests that there was a relatively intensive occupation at the site prior to the time that decorated ceramics were made in the Tucson Basin. This new awareness adds further to the already great significance of this site.

Other Results

In the upper levels of the large trash mound, there was a diversity of Hohokam painted pottery from both the Tucson and the Phoenix areas. Particularly abundant were Santa Cruz and Sacaton Red-on-buff from the Phoenix area. This pattern of more intensive interaction between the northern Tucson Basin and the Phoenix Basin was also documented at other recently excavated sites such as Redtail and Los Morteros near the north end of the Tucson Mountains.

Prior to these excavations, only a few pieces of pottery that date after AD. 1300 had been found on the site surface. But they were so rare that there had been a suspicion that the site was abandoned soon after AD. 1300. The excavations along the compound wall have yielded an additional 6 sherds of Gila Polychrome, a pottery type introduced about AD. 1300, which suggests that there may have been more of a late occupation at the site than had initially been assumed.

Study of the flotation samples by Charlie Miksicek has already shown the great importance of agave to the inhabitants of the Romero Ruin, and the animal bone analysis just begun by Steven James should give us further insights into their diet. We will have an update on overall results in the near future.

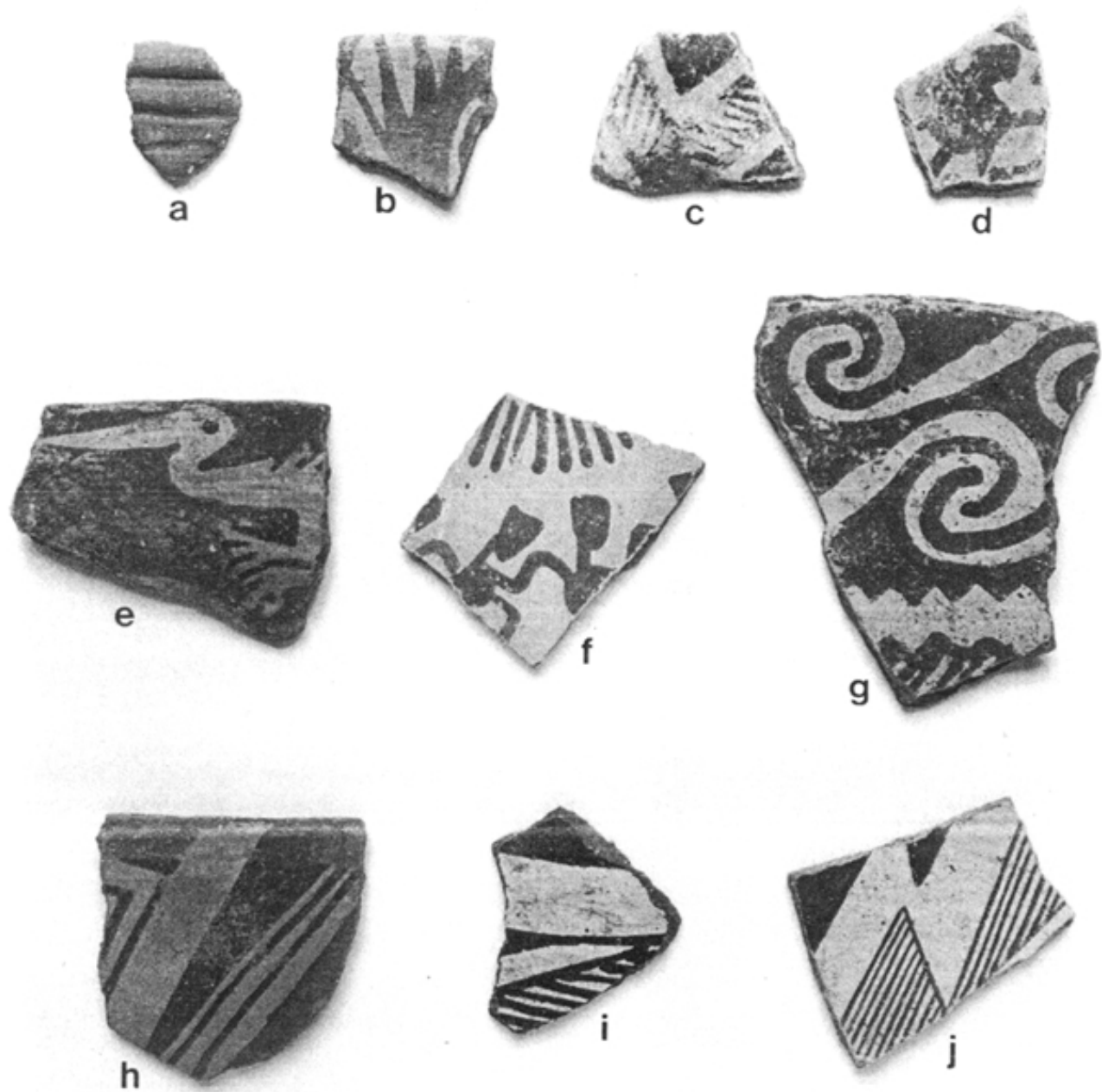
San Pedro Survey Starts its Second Year

Time has flown by this past year, at least in part due to all the fun that the participants on the Lower San Pedro Survey are having. Last Spring we covered the area north of Redington with productive results that were detailed in the most recent newsletter. Last Fall and continuing again this Winter, we are working primarily on land owned by Magma Copper of San Manuel. This project is funded solely by the Center and its volunteers.

In the last newsletter we noted being puzzled by not finding any new ballcourts in our study area. Fortunately, volunteer Cherie Freeman took our concern to heart, discovering a ballcourt in a somewhat unlikely location. It takes a very discerning eye to pick out the many sherds and fragments of stone tools that are mixed with the gravels on the surface of the Freeman Site. But the outline of the ballcourt was immediately obvious to Cherie as the crew she was with made their last pass of the day. Congratulations, Cherie, you are now one of the elite few who have discovered a Hohokam ballcourt!

Luckily, each volunteer on the Lower San Pedro Survey has shared in many exciting discoveries. It is extremely rare that one of our crews finishes the day without finding at least one new site.

If you are interested in participating in the Lower San Pedro Survey, we require only that you be in good physical condition and that you are a paid up member of *Archaeology in Tucson*. If you need more information, or you want to sign up to survey, please call Jennifer at 881-2244. Our current plan is to survey on the first Saturday and the third Sunday of each month. If the weather cooperates we will continue until early May of 1991. After a summer break we plan to continue again in the Fall of 1991.



Decorated Ceramics from testing at the Romero Ruin. Ceramic types include a probable local variant of Estrella Red-on-gray (a); Cañada del Oro Red-on-brown (b); Gila Butte Red-on-buff (c); Rillito or Early Rincon Red-on-brown depicting a turtle (d); Rillito Red-on-brown showing a bird in negative (e); Sacaton Red-on-buff with dancing humans and scrolls (f and g, respectively); Tanque Verde Red-on-brown (h); Gila Polychrome (i); and Reserve or Tularosa Black-on-white, a tradeware probably from east-central Arizona (j). Daniel Snyder, photographer.

Catching Up with the Newsletter Schedule

As many of you are well aware, we have fallen slightly behind in our newsletter schedule. We are working hard to remedy this situation and we are taking measures to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

Effective immediately, Allen Dart will play a more active role in the publication of the Newsletter and in coordinating volunteer activities in general. Some of the upcoming Newsletter topics include: the turn of the century archaeology at the Ronstadt Transit Center, the archaeology of the Upper Tonto Basin based on the results of the Rye Creek Project, and further information on the Romero Ruin.

We extend our sincere apologies to all our members, and we appreciate your patience.

Membership Application

Archaeology in Tucson Membership Application

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
Zipcode _____ Telephone _____
Annual Membership Dues Enclosed _____

Annual Membership Rates

Individual	\$10	Corporate Rates:	<u>MAIL TO:</u>
Family	\$15	Active	\$100
Supporting	\$25	Supporting	\$200
Contributing	\$50	Sustaining	\$500
Sustaining	\$100		
Patron	\$500		

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The Center for Desert Archaeology

The Center for Desert Archaeology is a nonprofit, research and educational organization that specializes in the study of the archaeology and history of desert regions. Our Primary research focus has been southern Arizona.

Archaeology in Tucson is the membership program of the Center for Desert Archaeology. The *Archaeology in Tucson* Newsletter is published quarterly, and is one of the benefits that members receive. Lectures, site tours, discounts on publications, and participation in archaeological field projects are additional membership benefits. Memberships run for a full year from the time they are received.

Annual Membership Rates

Individual \$10, Family \$15, Supporting \$25, Contributing \$50, Sustaining \$100, Patron \$500.

Corporate Rates: Active \$100, Supporting \$200, Sustaining \$500.

