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Searching for Geronimo: My Journeys with the Chiricahua Apache

Rebecca Orozco
Cochise College, Douglas, Arizona



C. S. Fly photo of the Geronimo-Naiche band at Canyon de los Embudos, March 1886; Geronimo stands in front of Naiche on horseback (Arizona Historical Society)

Although Cochise County in southeast Arizona bears the name of one of the most famous Native American leaders in history and county place names bear witness to the long relationship of this landscape to the people who call themselves Indeh, none live here today.

In September 1886 the U.S. government declared the Chiricahua Apache peoples prisoners of war and incarcerated them in Florida. Those imprisoned included many who had lived according to the law on the various reservations assigned to them since 1872. Those jailed also included Apache scouts who had served the U.S. Military in actions against the small group of hostiles that resisted until the final surrender of Geronimo and Naiche's small band. They remained POWs until 1913, held first in Florida, then Alabama and finally Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Ultimately released in 1913, some Chiricahua remained in the area near Fort Sill, while about two thirds of the tribe relocated to the Mescalero Apache reservation in New Mexico. Remnants of the bands remained in the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico, still occasionally raiding into Arizona and New Mexico until continued

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¹ Issue no. 4 for the 2012 membership year. Due to production difficulties this issue was not actually published until 2015.



military and population pressures forced their assimilation in the 1930s.

It was not until 1986, in commemoration of the centennial of the final surrender that the Chiricahua returned to their homeland. That began my personal connection to the survivors. I am a third generation resident of Cochise County. My grandfather told me stories of seeing parties of Chiricahua near Tombstone in his youth. At the time I was adjunct faculty for Cochise College and teaching area history for the Elderhostel program. I had worked as a park ranger at Chiricahua National Monument and had studied Chiricahua history. I worked with the committee organizing their return and acted as their guide to sites important to their history.

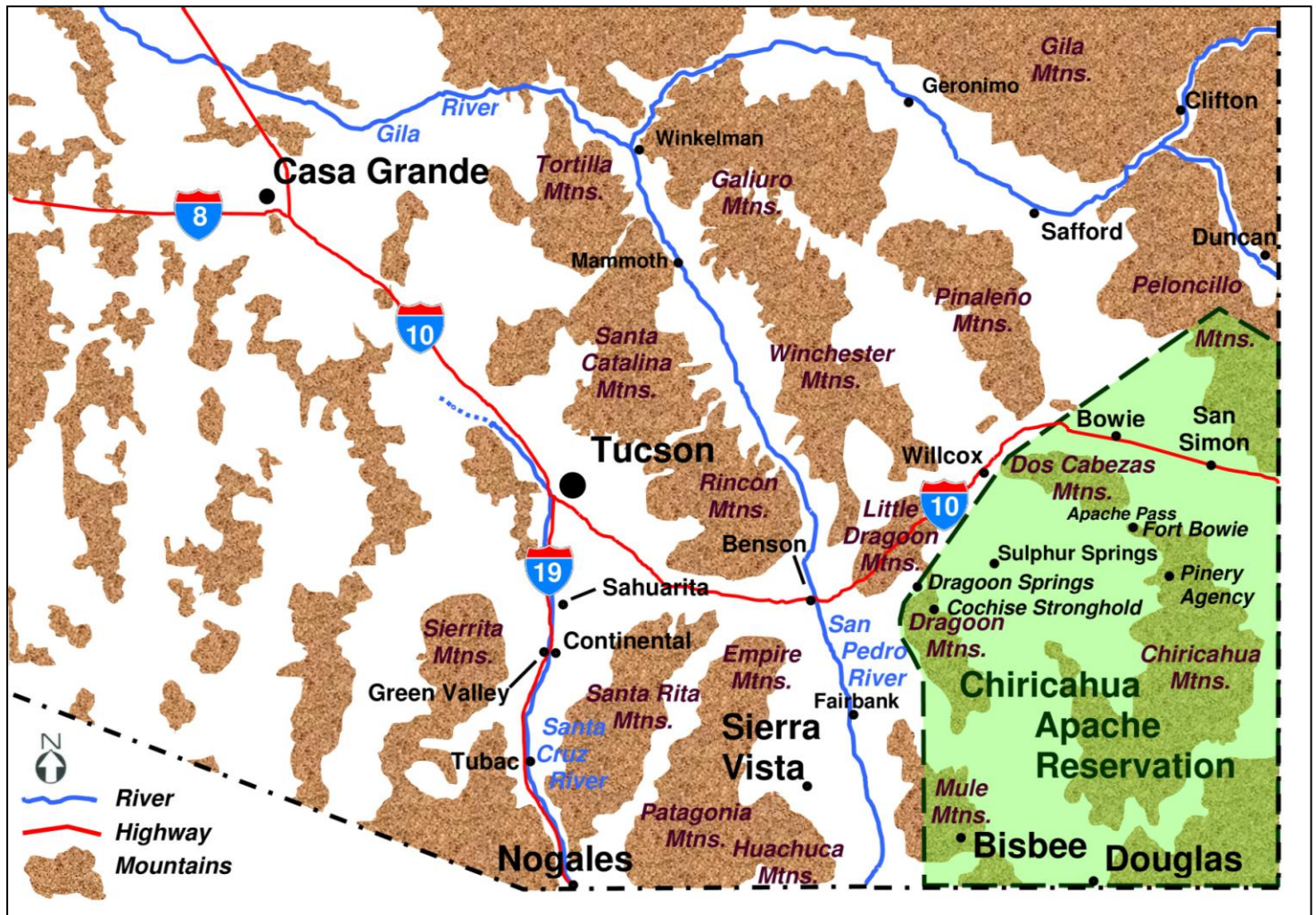
The mountains and valleys of the Southwest had been the home of the Chiricahua Apache for centuries. The Chokonen, Bedonkohe, Chihinne, and Nednai bands successfully adapted to the semiarid landscape, surviving centuries of pressure from outside groups and a seemingly hostile environment. Hunter-gatherer-raider-traders, the people shifted subsistence strategies according to the realities of the times. As pressure from outside forces increased, first from Spanish and Mexican colonists, then immigrants from the United States, less and less time could be devoted to hunting and gathering, and raiding became the major means of subsistence. Because the most vulnerable members of the tribe, the women and children, were responsible for gathering, that activity decreased dramatically in time of conflict.

Relatively late arrivals in today's borderlands, the Athapaskan-speaking newcomers interacted with the Piman farming peoples who occupied the region in a loose relationship of trading and raiding that

Author's note: In 1986 the Arizona Historical Society allowed me to copy the C. S. Fly photos and use them in exchange for teaching a number of programs for AHS.



*C.S. Fly photo of meeting between General George Crook (second from right) and Geronimo (third from left)
Canon de los Embudos, March 1886
(Arizona Historical Society)*



Approximate boundaries of the 1872-1876 Chiricahua Apache Reservation, reconstructed for this article from a description in Annual Report of the Commissioner for Indian Affairs, 1872

characterized native relationships throughout the Southwest along the confluence between fertile valleys and arid plains. The nomadic Chiricahua Apache traveled a seasonal migration pattern that followed a cycle of wild food harvest in a yearly movement that took them south into the Sierra Madre and north as far as the Mogollon Rim in some years. The wild foods were supplemented by trading with the farming peoples along the way. Raiding provided goods when trading failed. The taking of women and children augmented tribal numbers for both sides. The introduction of the horse into the area by the Spanish revolutionized the pattern, making raiding a more significant factor in the Apachean economy.

This relatively symbiotic relationship collapsed with the appearance of Spanish explorers and missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Spaniards responded to the sporadic Apache raids by attacking and killing the raiders, setting off a cycle of revenge and retribution that forced the Sobaipuri farmers and early Spanish settlers west to the Santa Cruz River. Although the level of danger increased with the arrival of Spanish soldiery, so did the opportunity for raiding as the newcomers established towns in northern Sonora and Chihuahua. The long distance migrations that once followed the annual harvest now focused on raiding communities in the same region, successfully halting most settlement on the northern frontier until their final surrender and removal from the Southwest in 1886.

The Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 shifted territorial claims for the region from Mexico to the United States. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the conflict with Mexico ceding her northern territories. In return, the United States agreed to stop raiding by the Apaches and other Native American groups into Mexico, a proposal that was impossible to uphold. The Gadsden Purchase of 1854 transferred more Apache territory to U.S. control and dropped the prior provision that promised to control raiding.

Initial relations between the victorious U.S. and the Chiricahua were relatively peaceful, but the clash



C.S. Fly photo of Naiche and Geronimo at Fort Bowie prior to departure for Florida, September 1886 (Arizona Historical Society)

of cultures was inevitable leading to more than two decades of conflict. For a brief period from 1872 until 1876, the Chiricahua were established on a reservation that included most of present-day Cochise County. Initially the Chiricahua attempted to keep their end of the bargain but a lack of consistency in Indian policy and pressure to open new lands for development caused the U.S to continually disregard previous treaties. The inconsistent arrival of supplies meant to help the Chiricahua settle into a farming lifestyle caused a predictable failure of the system. Between the need for food and the cultural imperative that required participation in raiding as a prerequisite for reaching manhood, the practice escalated, especially into Mexico.

Authorities cited the attacks as a factor in the decision to disband the reservation and relocate the Chiricahua to the San Carlos Apache Reservation. Conditions there led to the resumption of hostilities by a small contingent of Chiricahua that included Geronimo and Naiche, the son of legendary leader Cochise, who fled the reservation in 1879. In the interim, thousands of prospectors had flooded into the border regions following news of rich silver strikes in Tombstone and the surrounding mountains. The clash of the new settlers and the hostile Chiricahua brought an intense military response from both the U.S. and Mexican governments. This period of warfare lasted until the final surrender of Geronimo, Naiche, and their small band in September 1886.

As the last hostile band to surrender to the U.S. forces, the Apache wars are legendary, fueling countless novels and movies. For the Chiricahua living in Oklahoma and New Mexico, those fictionalized glimpses comprised their vision as well. Mildred Cleghorn, tribal chairwoman of the Fort Sill Chiricahua group, told me she wondered about Cochise's blue eyes (played by Jeff Chandler in the 1950 film *Broken Arrow* – her early and only point of reference). For her and the more than 175 Chiricahua who traveled to Cochise County in 1986, this was a spiritual journey. To walk the canyons where their grandparents had once lived and to see the evidence of their passing in the rock art and mescal roasting pits in Cochise Stronghold represented a long overdue homecoming. As we toured the Stronghold, local rancher Richard Shaw inquired about the group. As a result of the meeting, he deeded four acres of land in the canyon to the tribe, returning to them a tiny remnant of their once vast territory.

One of the participants in the four-day commemoration was Neil Goodwin, film-maker and son of anthropologist Grenville Goodwin who studied the Apaches in the 1930s. Grenville traveled to the Sierra Madre during that time and saw the evidence of recently dispersed Chiricahua. Neil



*Mildred Cleghorn (right) with Rebecca and Xochitl Orozco, 1986
Photo courtesy of the author*



*Canon de los Embudos, 1987; Neil Goodwin is in the red sweater
Photo courtesy of the author*



*The Río Bavispe in Mexico's Sierra Madre
Photo courtesy of the author*

planned to follow his father's path into the mountains, interweaving that journey with the oral histories of the descendants of the Chiricahua who once sought sanctuary there. The project became the basis for the film *Geronimo and the Apache Resistance* (PBS, *The American Experience*, 1988) and his book *The Apache Diaries* (2000).

I joined the expedition into Mexico as historical consultant and helper in a memorable journey in 1987. Arlis and Burl Kanseah, descendants of Jasper Kanseah who was a member the final band of Chiricahua to surrender, accompanied the expedition. Standing in the shadow of Geronimo's final mountain camp with them was a privilege that moves me still.

In the years following the centennial, the friendships forged in southeast Arizona and the Sierra Madre grew. I was often honored to speak on behalf of the tribe at historical commemorations they could not attend, such as the centennial of the decommissioning of Fort Bowie in 1994. The oral histories gathered in 1987 provide documentation of the final survivors born as prisoners of war.

Today, the Chiricahua are few in number, now intermarried with Mescalero in New Mexico and neighboring peoples in Oklahoma. The story and landscape remain, testimony to a clash of cultures exacerbated by colonial powers, land hunger, and Manifest Destiny. It has become a part of my story as well, nurtured by friendships and study. I can see Cochise's final Stronghold as I walk across the Cochise College campus, memorial to a people not long removed but whose legacy remains in their memory and in place names sketched across the landscape.



*Filming on the Bavispe River, Sonora, in 1987
Photo courtesy of the author*



*Arlis and Berle Kanseah at Geronimo's Stronghold
above the Río Bavispe
Photo courtesy of the author*



Did You Know? Pithouses in the American Southwest

Allen Dart

Pithouses (also spelled “pit houses” and “pit-houses”) were a common form of architecture used by ancient Native Americans in the American Southwest. These houses were built by digging a large flat-bottomed pit into the ground and smoothing out the pit bottom so it could be used as a floor, then a roof and outside walls were constructed either over or inside the pit. The house pit might be as shallow as a few inches or up to several feet deep depending on the needs and preferences of the builders. The roof and walls usually were constructed using a combination of large and small posts made from tree trunks and tree limbs, and the houses were made weatherproof by lining the wooden parts with branches, tree bark, or mats. Often the wall and roof linings were covered with dirt or mud.

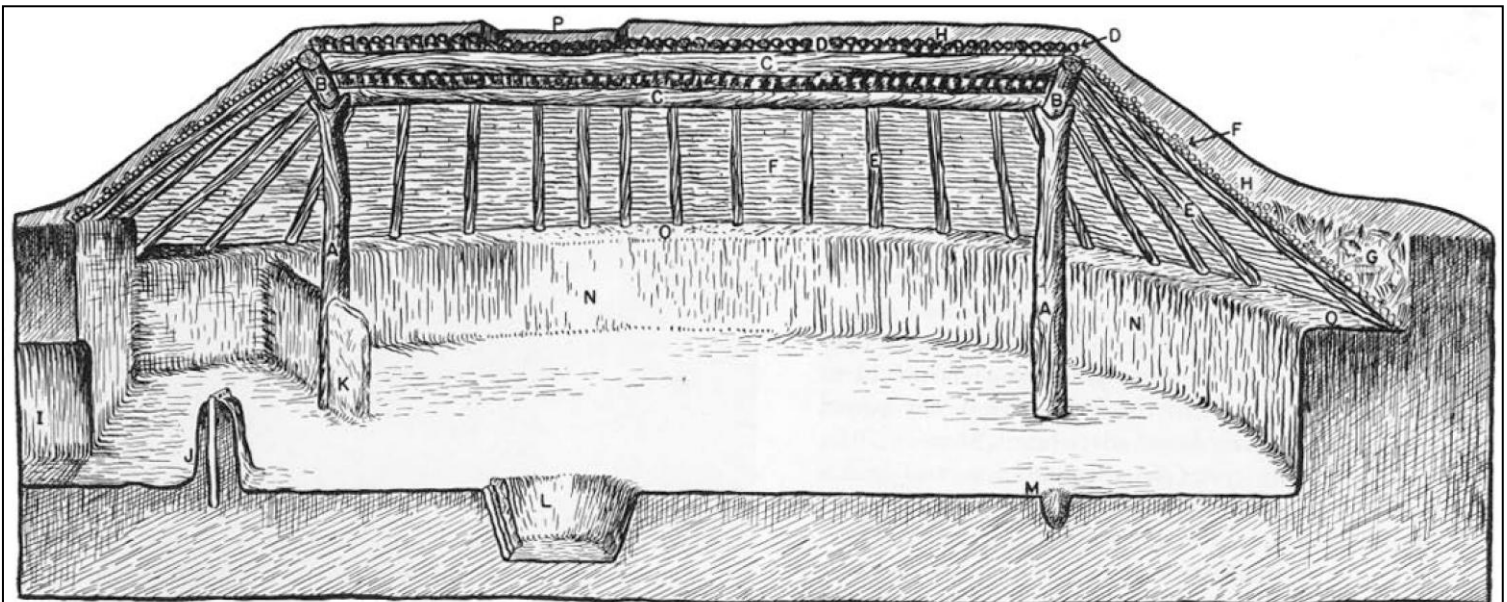


PLATE 5—*Postulated Method of Roof Construction of First Pithouse*

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| A. Main support posts. | E. Sloping side poles. | I. Tunnel to antechamber. | M. Sipapu. |
| B. Main stringers. | F. Poles, brush, or reeds. | J. Deflector. | N. Plastered walls. |
| C. Secondary stringers. | G. Bark and trash fill. | K. Wingwall. | O. Bench. |
| D. Slender poles or withes. | H. Earth covering. | L. Firepit. | P. Smokehole and hatchway. |

Cut-away-view drawing of the “true pithouse” form in which the wall framework was placed on top of the house pit (from “Excavation of Two Late Basketmaker III Pithouses” by James A Lancaster and Don Watson, 1950; National Park Service illustration from Mesa Verde National Park web site)



In what some southwestern archaeologists consider the “true pithouse” form, the wooden wall framework for the upper part of the house was placed on the outside of the house pit, along its top edge, as shown in the illustration above. Sometimes large rock slabs were placed upright against the sides of the house pit to stabilize the pit sides. The “true pithouse” form is often seen in archaeological sites of the Ancestral Pueblo and Mogollon southwestern cultures in the northern and eastern parts of the Southwest.

Left: Some Mogollon pithouses were rectangular and several feet deep below the original ground level, as in this example at the Harris site in southwestern New Mexico (Allen Dart photo)



Above and left: Four views of a diorama constructed by Old Pueblo volunteer Gail Roper showing cut-away views of what a Hohokam "house-in-pit" type of pithouse may have looked like

Another form of pit-structure is the "house-in-pit" form of pithouse, in which the framework for the walls was placed inside the house pit, along the edges of the floor as illustrated on this and the next pages. The house-in-pit form is more typical of the Early Agricultural, Early Ceramic, and Hohokam cultures in the southern Southwest.

For building the roof of either type of pithouse, usually two or more large upright wooden posts were set into the floor, then wooden logs were placed on the tops of the upright posts to form a framework to hold up the weight of the roof.

Usually the outer walls of a pithouse were made by setting upright wooden posts into the ground at the top of the house pit (in true pithouses) or down to the floor (in house-in-pit structures), and either leaning the upright posts against the roofing framework and tying them, or by setting the posts upright and attaching other poles to the uprights to extend horizontally over to the roof beams. After the



Below: An Early Agricultural or Early Ceramic period pithouse at the Santa Cruz Bend site in Tucson; the swath through its center is the archaeological test trench in which the house was discovered, before it was fully excavated (Allen Dart photo)



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wall posts were up, branches, tree bark, or mats were attached to the outsides of the posts to form a ceiling and wall coverings. Finally, to keep water and wind from coming through, either mud was plastered over the outer coverings or, if the walls leaned in enough, dirt was piled on them.

In some pithouses the floor was just the bare earth at the bottom of the pit. Sometimes the house floors were paved with rock slabs. In other cases, the floors were plastered over with mud that eventually dried. In regions



*Outline and floor of a Hohokam house-in-pit-type house excavated at the Yuma Wash archaeological site in Marana, Arizona; in this example you can see the extended-out entryway on the left and the small, basin-shaped fire pit just to the left of the photo board
(Old Pueblo Archaeology Center photo by Courtney Rose)*

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Allen Dart

where soils were alkaline enough for caliche horizons to develop, caliche sometimes was added to the mud to make the plaster harder and more durable.

In some pithouses the only access was through an opening in the roof, using a notched log or ladder to climb in and out. In this kind, sometimes a large rock slab was used to cover the entry hole during bad weather.

For a pithouse in which entry was through a wall opening, often the entryway was extended outward through a covered corridor or even a formally built antechamber (vestibule). The actual door covering for a side-entry house might only have been a blanket, a woven mat, or a framework of small poles and brush that could be placed over the opening as shown in the diorama on page 7.

Unless the house was used mainly for storage, it is common to find a hearth or fire pit built into the floor. The fireplace was usually just a small pit dug into the floor, as shown in the Hohokam pithouse above, but in many cases pithouse hearths were lined with mud plaster or, sometime, with stone slabs as shown in the page 6 diagram.

In addition to a hearth, many ancient pithouses include other furniture features built into the floor. These might include one or more storage pits, depressions into which round-bottomed pots or baskets could be placed, other holes or pits for various other uses, post-holes where the ladder bottom or shelf-support posts were set into the floor, food-grinding boxes that included a milling stone and upright slabs, and, in very deep pithouses, a small tunnel to bring in fresh air from the outside and an upright stone to deflect the incoming air flow away from the fire pit so that the draft would not scatter embers and ashes. However, not all pit residences included these other kinds of built-in furniture, and some did not have any of them.

Some Upcoming Activities



ONGOING: The OPEN3 simulated archaeological excavations, OPENOUT in-classroom education programs, and archaeological site tours for children

OTHER ACTIVITIES MAY HAVE BEEN ADDED!

For updates and details please contact
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If you would like us to email you a flyer with more information and color photos for any of these activities, send an email to info@oldpueblo.org with "Send flyer" AND THE EVENT'S DATE in your email subject line.

Thursday January 15, 2015: Tucson

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's "Third Thursday Food for Thought" dinner featuring the presentation "Underpinnings of Southern Arizona Historical Archaeology: The Historical Record" by historian Jim Turner at Dragon's View Asian Cuisine, 400 N. Bonita Avenue, Tucson

6 to 8:30 p.m. Free (Order your dinner off of the restaurant menu)

Approximately 60 percent of southern Arizona's pre-1964 Historic period spanned the Spanish Colonial and Mexican periods when Spain, and subsequently Mexico, granted large parcels of land in this region to a few individuals to encourage non-Indian settlement and extraction of resources. When the U.S. took over the territory, grantees' heirs or purchasers (or claimants) were able to petition the U.S. Government to recognize the historic grants in the hope that the U.S. would give title to the grant lands to the purchasers/claimants. Historian Jim Turner shows that the history of southern Arizona land grants is essentially the history of water use, that is, the land grants provide a kind of key to which portions of the Gadsden Purchase area (the part of Arizona south of the Gila River) were the most favorable for Spanish, Mexican, and later U.S. settlement. Because much of the Spanish and Mexican settlement of southern Arizona was associated with the land grants, they figure importantly in the historical archaeology of this region. Archaeologists therefore need to be well-versed in the land grant history of southern Arizona to understand and interpret the Spanish Colonial, Mexican period, and even Territorial period archaeological sites.



Foundation of a jacal (brush-and-mud-walled) structure at Terrenate Spanish Colonial site (Photograph by Jim Turner)

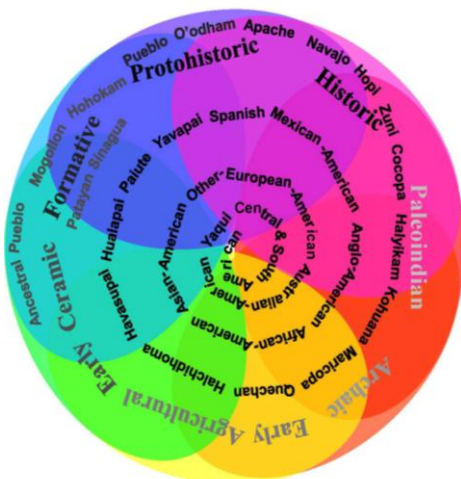
Guests may select and purchase their own dinners from the restaurant's menu. There is no entry fee but donations will be requested to benefit Old Pueblo's educational efforts. Because seating is limited in order for the program to be in compliance with the Fire Code, those wishing to attend must call 520-798-1201 and must have their reservations confirmed before 5 p.m. Wednesday January 14.

Mondays January 19-February 9, 2015: Sun City West, AZ

"Archaeology, Cultures, and Ancient Arts of Southern Arizona" adult education class for Recreation Centers of Sun City West in the R. H. Johnson Recreation Center, 19803 R. H. Johnson Blvd., Sun City West, Arizona

Every Monday Jan. 19 & 26 and Feb. 2 & 9 from 6 to 8 p.m. Fee \$35

In this four-session class on Monday evenings, Allen Dart, a Registered Professional Archaeologist and volunteer director of the Old Pueblo Archaeology Center in Tucson, will provide information about the archaeology and cultures of Arizona and the Southwest, focusing on the arts and material culture of southern Arizona's prehistoric peoples. The first session, "Archaeology and Cultures of Arizona," will summarize and interpret the archaeology of Arizona from the earliest "Paleoindians" through Archaic period hunters and foragers, the transition to true village life, and the later prehistoric archaeological cultures (Puebloan, Mogollon, Sinagua, Hohokam, Salado, and Patayan). Mr. Dart also will relate the archaeological cultures to the Native American, European, Mexican, African, and Asian peoples who have been part of our state's more recent

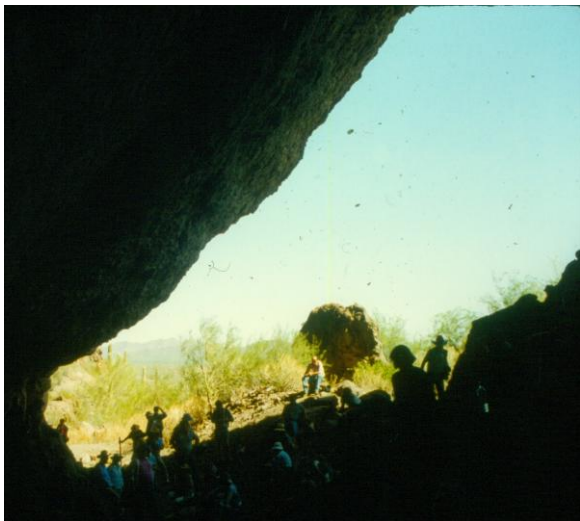


ALL-ARIZONAN ALL-AMERICANS



history. In Session 2, "Arts and Culture of Ancient Southern Arizona Hohokam Indians," artifacts, architecture, and other material culture of southern Arizona's ancient Hohokam culture are illustrated and discussed. The arts and culture that the Hohokam left behind provide archaeologists with clues for interpreting their relationships to the natural world, time reckoning, religious practices, beliefs, and deities, and possible reasons for the eventual demise of their way of life. Session 3, "Ancient Native American Pottery of Southern Arizona," focuses on some of the Native American ceramic styles that characterized specific eras in southern Arizona prehistory and history, and discusses how archaeologists use pottery for dating archaeological sites and interpreting ancient lifeways of the ancient Early Ceramic and Hohokam cultures, and of the historical Piman (Tohono O'odham and Akimel O'odham), Yuman (including Mohave and Maricopa), and Apachean peoples. Finally, in Session 4, "Set in Stone but Not in Meaning: Southwestern Indian Rock Art," Mr. Dart illustrates pictographs (rock paintings) and petroglyphs (symbols carved or pecked on rocks) found in the Southwest, and discusses how even the same rock art symbol may be interpreted differently from popular, scientific, and modern Native American perspectives.

* This is not an Old Pueblo Archaeology Center event. For more information contact Tamra Stark at 623-544-6194 or tamra.stark@rcscw.com in Sun City West; for information about the activity subject matter contact Allen Dart at Tucson telephone 520-798-1201 or adart@oldpueblo.org.



*Ventana Cave, from the inside looking out
(Photograph by Marc Severson)*

Saturday January 31, 2015: Tohono O'odham Nation, AZ

"Rock Art and Archaeology of Ventana Cave" Old Pueblo Archaeology Center carpooling educational tour with archaeologist Allen Dart departing from Pima Community College, 401 N. Bonita Ave., Tucson

6:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Fee \$35 (\$28 for Old Pueblo Archaeology Center and Pueblo Grande Museum Auxiliary members; no charge for members or employees of the Tohono O'odham Nation)

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center offers this early-morning carpool tour onto the Tohono O'odham Nation to visit the Ventana Cave National Historic Landmark site. During the Arizona State Museum's 1940s excavations in the cave, led by archaeologists Emil W. Haury and Julian Hayden, evidence was found for human occupation going back from historic times to around 10,000 years ago. The cave, which actually is a very large rockshelter, also contains pictographs, petroglyphs, and other archaeological features used by Native Americans for thousands of years. Tour leaves Tucson at 6:30 a.m. to ensure the pictographs can be seen in the best morning light. Fees will benefit the

Tohono O'odham Hickiwan District's efforts to develop a caretaker-interpretive center at Ventana Cave, and the nonprofit Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's education programs.

Reservations required by Wednesday January 29: 520-798-1201 or info@oldpueblo.org.

Thursday February 19, 2015: Tucson

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's "Third Thursday Food for Thought" dinner and presentation (title, guest speaker, & Tucson restaurant location to be announced]

6 to 8:30 p.m. Free (Order your own dinner off of the restaurant's menu)

Details coming.

Guests may select and purchase their own dinners from the restaurant's menu. There is no entry fee but donations will be requested to benefit Old Pueblo's educational efforts. Because seating is limited in order for the program to be in compliance with the Fire Code, those wishing to attend must call 520-798-1201 and must have their reservations confirmed before 5 p.m. Wednesday February 18.

Saturday February 21, 2015

"White Tank Mountains Petroglyphs of Waterfall Canyon & Mesquite Canyon" guided archaeological site tour with Allen Dart for Recreation Centers of Sun City West in White Tank Mountain Regional Park, 20304 W. White Tank Mountain Road, Waddell, Arizona*

8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. \$35 fee includes park entry fee

Archaeologist Allen Dart guides this tour to see hundreds of ancient petroglyphs in the 30,000-acre White Tank Mountain Regional Park west of Phoenix. Tour includes a 3-hour walk along the 2.5-mile-roundtrip, fairly flat Waterfall Canyon-Black Rock Loop Trail to see and photograph dozens of Archaic and Hohokam petroglyphs; lunch

at ramadas with picnic facilities; then an afternoon hike to three petroglyph sites with Archaic and Hohokam rock art in a 3-hour, 2.5-mile-roundtrip hike along the Mesquite Canyon trail, which includes some bush-whacking and boulder-hopping. Bring your own picnic lunch and water, wear comfortable hiking shoes.

* This is not an Old Pueblo Archaeology Center event. Register for the tour online at www.rcscw.com (click on the EXPLORE tab in left-hand column). For more information about registration contact Tamra Stark at 623-544-6194 or tamra.stark@rcscw.com in Sun City West; for information about the activity subject matter contact Allen Dart at Tucson telephone 520-798-1201 or adart@oldpueblo.org.



Right: One of the hundreds of petroglyphs in White Tank Mountain Regional Park (Photograph by Shelley Rasmussen)

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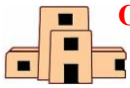
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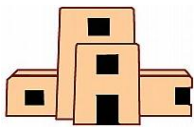
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*Geronimo Naiche,
and other Chiricahua Apaches
See page 1*

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