

## **Summary of SFNF Site Steward Educational Meeting February 8, 2006**

An evening educational meeting was held on Wednesday, February 8, 2006, at Dominic's in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Nineteen site stewards and their guests attended.

Mike introduced the guest speaker, Chris Turnbow, Deputy Director of the Laboratory of Anthropology and Museum of Indian Arts and Culture (MIAC). Before coming to the Lab, Chris was the lead archaeologist on the Olé Project, a PNM-sponsored power line in northern New Mexico.

Chris thanked the group for their participation in the Sun Mountain Gathering last fall. This fall's Gathering will be a one-day event on October 7, and Site Stewards are invited to have a booth as well as participate as demonstrators.

The Laboratory of Anthropology on Museum Hill was founded in 1928, with financial assistance of J.D. Rockefeller who recognized the need for housing artifacts from Mesa Verde. Many prominent researchers in the Southwest have worked at the Lab, and it remains a source of remarkable collections and records from 20<sup>th</sup> century archaeologists' excavations and surveys. MIAC was built in 1987 to exhibit collections representing Native American cultures, past and present.

Chris' presentation was entitled "In Search of the Seventh Parrot", based on an outstanding Mimbres bowl featuring six painted parrots and a fragment of a seventh. Mimbres sites are included within the Mogollon culture area, which spans southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. Located near and in the Gila Wilderness area, its boundaries span from Truth or Consequences to Silver City. The topography is very rough, with sites in valleys and uplands.

The region was initially occupied by hunters and gatherers ca. 13,000 BC. Corn was introduced about 800 BC. Artifacts dating to the Archaic and early Puebloan eras include large dart points, subterranean rooms with storage pits and side ramp entrances, and brown ceramic wares by AD 200. By ca. AD 600 structures are bean-shaped, and measure 5-7 m in diameter. By AD 800, pottery changed to decorated redware (San Francisco R/W and Mogollon R/B), the latter probably inspired by redwares from Arizona. By AD 650 a simple corrugated form was produced.

Early corn (AD 700-800) was flint corn, which required one-hand manos and bowl metates. Later in the period flour corn was introduced, which required two-hand manos and trough metates. By AD 800 there is evidence that irrigation was used on crops in the Mimbres Valley. Evidence of many changes occurred by AD 900, representing the last major shift in subsistence patterns and habitation structures. With intensive agriculture came more sedentism, and square pithouses with a roof entrance. AD 1000 is recognized as the beginning of the classic Mimbres cultural assemblage. From shallow pithouses with subsurface floors, changes included surface room blocks with adobe/stone walls (cannon balls in mud), stacked stone walls in room blocks, stone-lined hearths; all structures had roof, instead of ramp, entrances. A typical village contained fewer than 200 one-story-high clusters of rooms, enclosed ritual/work spaces, three

styles of Mimbres Black-on-White (B/W) featuring animals and people in various activities. Slides illustrating the MIAC collections show stunning examples of design and motif. Most of the figurative pottery occurs in Style III, late in the AD 1000-1140 period of the classic Mimbres, and remains sought after by collectors.

Burial practices during the classic Mimbres included both flexed burials with a bowl placed over the face, and cremations. Females were usually buried inside the house, which suggests a matrilineal, matrilocal society. Fifty-five percent of the burials interred in older room floors are accompanied by one vessel. The AD 800-900 period had kivas; shrines in room blocks were more common in later periods.

Although present-law laws (Archaeological Resources Protection Act – ARPA) prevent the use of mechanical equipment, by 1997 97% of all the Mimbres habitation sites had been looted. There are an estimated 10,000 Mimbres pots in private collections.

Chris described his recovery operations at a Mimbres site in the Gila Wilderness as a result of looting incidents in 2000. Three individuals were observed digging at a site, the Forest LEO was contacted, and a seismic sensor was set up to alert the Forest Service of their activities. The three were found guilty by a jury of peers, fined, and sentenced to jail terms. During the investigation, a photo of a Mimbres bowl featuring six painted parrots and a fragment of a seventh was retrieved. No information was then obtained as to its disposition. The Lab began a three-week recovery project in 2002. Aided by a fleet of volunteers from various organizations, including Grant County Archaeological Society, students from Texas A&M and Silver City high school, the volunteers screened back dirt, backfilled potholes, profiled the walls, cleaned up and stabilized the site. Since the site was located in the Gila Wilderness, all equipment was brought in by pack mules. Some lab work was done in the field to minimize the carry-out loads. A total 6000 hours was contributed by volunteers.

So what about that seventh parrot? Chris explained that recently he saw a photograph of a reconstructed or repaired bowl that resembles the photograph of the same (?) bowl retrieved from one of the looter's possession. It was in recently published book, and he is searching for the owner of the bowl.

Summing up the Mimbres culture, Chris pointed out that evidence points to a sudden collapse between AD 1120-1140, probably because of ecological failure. The large population was largely dependent on irrigation, and probably overexploited the area's resource base. Subsequent probable Mimbres small hamlets have been found at higher elevations, some of the population went to Mexico–Paquime and Casas Grandes– and some were probably assimilated into other groups in nearby areas.

In spite of the heavy damage inflicted upon classic Mimbres sites (D-9 bulldozers clear the room surface to expose burials associated with pottery), the sites do yield information.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Nancy Cella