

UTAH COUNTY CHAPTER

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Your Help Is Needed
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Utah Statewide Archaeological Society
Utah County Chapter
February Regular Meeting
February 16, 2012 7:00 PM

Lehi's Hutchings Museum
55 North Center Street, Lehi, Utah

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<http://www.utaharchaeology.org/> -And- <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/USAS-group/>

FEBRUARY 2012

February Regular Meeting Thursday February 16th, 2012 at 7:00 pm
Lehi's Hutchings Museum, 55 North Center Street in Lehi, Utah

Our Guest speaker will be Tom Flanigan with the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests. He will be talking about his project "Decisions in the Desert: Behavioral Implications of Obsidian Procurement in Utah's West Desert". This is an ongoing research project that is studying the transport distance of obsidian found in archaeological sites in the Vernon Unit and the Stansbury Mountains. The study is investigating whether transport distance, or the quality of toolstone, is the driving variable for the bulk of culturally transported obsidian found in these two study areas.

He will also be discussing the Heritage Stewardship volunteer program that offers the public a chance to volunteer for the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest's Heritage Program in a number of ways. Volunteer opportunities range from office based administrative assistance to monitoring archaeological sites in the field.

Meetings held: Third Thursday of the month

Utah Archaeology Journal Update

The 2010 issue of *Utah Archaeology* is off to the printers and should be available for distribution in the next month or two! The 2009 “Student” issue is still in progress and It’s hoped that it will be available by semesters end.

Those are our ancestors. They are us. That’s what matters.

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound? Can you be held accountable for something you have no knowledge of? Whose responsibility is that? These were the types of quandaries run into when asked to comment on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Provo Westside Connector, and it was obvious the hopes and mind set of the consulting engineer employed by the City of Provo was that the answers were, no; no; and not his. It was clear from his comments that he wanted we not dig too deep, that way the archaeology would not be found. The road is to be built up so it will just cover it all up, no harm, no foul. This seems to be the way of the world these days, everyone with their own specialty and little thought, knowledge or responsibility beyond. It is the way we are taught and trained, the least effort with minimized or ignored externalities. But with the public’s Cultural Heritage it is just as wrong to bury it as it is to doze it. The EIS was of little help either, with so little archaeological information provided as to render the casual reader unable to recognize this rich and sensitive heritage location. All of which probably contributed to some consulting parties passing on commenting. It’s clear we all need a deeper knowledge base and better understanding from which to make decisions of this kind.

As editor of our lowly newsletter I rely heavily on the work and writings of others, and in my attempts at gathering knowledge, I try to pass along what I have found. It seems that something always pops up just as needed at the most opportune times. This was again the case when I came upon an article titled “Remembrances of an Enduring People” by P.Z. Myers, associate professor of Biology at the University of Minnesota, Morris. Myers laments human mortality and our brief moment in the spotlight but equally the transience of our knowledge and its dimming through the ages, while searching for that spark in the ancient darkness, that message from the past that says “We were here. We were human. We were like you.”

He capably relates the findings of the scientists and the science that bring to light and to life the deep and rich history of our human heritage by highlighting two recently reported archaeological sites. The first is a 42,000-year-old cave site in East Timor in the Malay Archipelago, excavated by a team led by Sue O’Connor. The site held piles and piles of fish bones, half of which were tuna, shark and other deep-water fish. Not the common fair procured by hand from the shore or the shallows. The second site, another cave, dating to 100,000-years-ago was excavated by Christopher Henshilwood and colleagues in South Africa. Found here was a bowl-shaped abalone shell with a rounded stone nested in it, and a number of small thin and flattened stones

around it. A red compound found to be comprised of crushed marrow bone, charcoal and ocher were identified in the shell. This was an ancient artists tool kit with mortar and pestle, pigment and binder along with applicators.

After discussing at length all the inferences and implications of these finds he concludes.

“I see hardworking fishers paddling bodily out to sea, confident in their strength and ingenuity, using tools honed by generations of craftsmanship to do battle with great fish in the alien empty world of the open ocean. I see whole peoples setting off on voyages into the unknown to explore and settle new lands. I see creative people carefully mixing earth and bone, charcoal and oils, using formulas handed down from generation to generation to make bright and stark colors. I see happy laughing men and women painting their world with deft hands, stamping their mark on themselves and illuminating all that they see with new beauty.

Those are our ancestors. They are us. That’s what matters.”

These aren’t just stories from halfway around the world, this place we call home has been inhabited for more than 12,000 years, and stories of this kind fill the annals of it’s times. My first experience of excavating with USAS was at the West Canyon site, west of Lehi, Utah. This experience informed me of how the archaeology can be located right below our feet in our fields and towns. Another of the more recent projects I have been able to take part in was in the area of Seamons and Hinkley mounds adjacent to the Provo Airport. It is from these last sites that I have heard some of the most compelling stories in all my experience.

Recently at BYU artifacts and remains from the Hinkley mounds have been re-examined and Scott Ure, now with the Office of Public Archaeology, related to me some of their findings. Scott, together with Darrell Thomas, a Salt Lake City dentist and long time member of USAS, obtained dental tarter samples from one of the Fremont period burials uncovered back in the 1960's. They then sent the samples away for analysis and the findings were astounding. Microscopic analysis showed that this person had been eating what appears to be potatoes. A food crop certainly not native to this part of the country. Indicating a new food crop that had to have been imported and grown among the corn, beans and squash popular during the period. This is a remarkable example of how our knowledge and understanding can be greatly expanded with new and improved methods and technologies and a hint of what we might be able to learn in the future if we take time to protect and preserve the archaeology of today.

Another finding from these burials was of a young male about fourteen years of age with spinal bifida. This is a condition in which the spinal column doesn’t completely close to protect the spinal cord, and even today the outlook for survival of its victims is quite grim. I can’t help but feel for the parents of this child. On that happy day with the arrival of their new son, then the mood turning to worry and concern with the realization that something is just not quite right. I can only imagine those evenings around the family hearth trying to bring comfort and happiness

to the suffering child and the anguish of the looming times ahead. How do we deal with this? What can we do? Questions we still have to confront today and here are the voices from the past. "We were here. We were human. We were like you."

Everyone has a role to play in educating and informing the public of our shared heritage as citizens of this place and of the world. Archaeologists need to publish the reports from their field work and investigations. Educators need to make a priority of teaching and lay out a compelling reasoning of why everyone should have a well rounded understanding of the past. And here with USAS we need to do our part in getting everyone together and provide a showcase for our communities.

Remembrances of an Enduring People, *Free Inquiry*, February/March 2012 Vol.32 No.2
P.Z. Myers, associate professor of biology at the University of Minnesota, Morris.

**January Regular Meeting Thursday January 19th, 2012
7:00 pm at the Provo Library, 550 North University Ave.
Rock Art in the Upper Paria River With Troy Scotter**

Our speaker in January was Troy Scotter, Troy discussed rock art in the area of the Upper Paria River. The rock art includes Basketmaker II, Glen Canyon Linear V, Cave Valley, and more modern styles. It may also include Hopi influences. One interesting panel he discussed includes several of these styles along with interesting mask glyphs which seem to be a motif of a small region of southern Utah. Troy discussed and solicited input from the group to try and better understand these mask motifs and their place in comparison to other sites in Utah and northern Arizona.

Troy lives in Orem where he works as a business consultant. He has been studying Utah rock art for over a decade. He is the past president of the Utah Rock Art Research Association and is the current chair of that organization's Conservation and Preservation Committee. Troy really does know a lot about rock art and archeology as well as make up great stories. USAS members have figured this out and very much appreciate his willingness to share his experience with us.