

# ARCHAEOLOGY IN TUCSON

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## San Pedro River Prehistory

The answers to some of the most difficult questions in Southwestern archaeology may lie buried a relatively short distance from Tucson. The San Pedro River, located just one valley to the east of Tucson, may have been the route by which the Coronado expedition made its way to Cibola (Zuni) in 1540. And it was definitely visited by Father Kino and his military escort Juan Mateo Manje during the 1690s. Archaeologists have done some very important survey and excavation in the San Pedro already. But the San Pedro remains a mystery area. In the hope of shedding new light on some of those mysteries, Desert Archaeology is initiating a major survey project in the northern San Pedro valley. The project will begin this winter.

The major questions that we are interested in on this project have been asked by others before us. In particular, what prehistoric culture is represented at the sites from the 14th century that contain the beautiful polychrome pottery types such as Gila Polychrome and Tucson Polychrome? Secondly, what became of these people after the 14th century and who are the Sobaipuri, the Piman-speaking group encountered by Father Kino in the 1690s? After a review of some of the previous studies on the San Pedro, some initial ideas about these questions are presented.

We will rely heavily on volunteers from *Archaeology in Tucson* to accomplish this important project. If you would like to participate, you must be in good physical condition and a paid-up member of *Archaeology in Tucson*. An application has been enclosed.

### Previous Research

Some reconnaissance level work along the San Pedro was carried out in the late 1800s by Adolph Bandelier and in the early 1900s by Jesse Walter Fewkes of the Smithsonian Institution. The late 1920s and early 1930s saw brief surveys by Gila Pueblo and by University of California, Berkeley geographers Carl Sauer and Donald Brand. But the major research program along the San Pedro has been conducted by the Amerind Foundation, which was incorporated in 1937 and is based in Dragoon. This work is briefly listed. Excavations near Dragoon were carried out by Amerind founder William Shirley Fulton in the early 1930s; Carr Tuthill dug at the Gleeson site near Tombstone (1938-1939) and at Tres Alamos north of Benson (1940);



*New Desert Archaeology Logo. This logo will appear on all future Archaeology in Tucson Newsletters and on Desert Archaeology publications and other official undertakings.*

Arnold Withers excavated a ceremonial cave in the Winchester Mountains northeast of Benson (1941); Charles DiPeso completed numerous excavations including a ballcourt at an unnamed site north of Benson (1948), Babocomari village near Sierra Vista (1948-1949), Quiburi about 15 miles south of Benson (1950-1951), two sites north of Benson—the impressive Reeve Ruin and the small Bidegain site—were dug in 1956; and Rex Gerald tested the Davis Ranch site across the river from Reeve Ruin (1957). Recently Anne Woosley, the current Amerind Director, has returned to the site of Tres Alamos to map the site. In the upper San Pedro valley, south of Benson, the Bureau of Land Management has been conducting a good deal of survey and site evaluation recently. As an outgrowth of those studies, Deni Seymour has been investigating Sobaipuri sites as part of her doctoral research at the University of Arizona.

This enumeration of the Amerind and other work along the San Pedro may at first glance suggest that the San Pedro is well-known archaeologically. However, nearly all of it is located south of the area that Desert

Archaeology is proposing to survey. Two projects by the Highway Salvage Division of the Arizona State Museum that were done in 1969-1970 and field school excavations at two sites south of Winkelman are the only professional excavations completed in our study area. Only one, the Highway Salvage excavation of Second Canyon, has been published.

### Migrations?

Migration has been a popular explanation for the 14th century, or late Classic, prehistory of the San Pedro. In 1958, Charles DiPeso concluded that the Reeve Ruin represented an immigration to the Middle San Pedro of a Western Pueblo group. In the late 1970s Bruce Masse and Hayward Franklin argued that the late prehistoric occupation of the San Pedro represented a Salado migration, a reference to people with a homeland in the Tonto Basin (Lake Roosevelt). Masse also believes that the early historic Sobaipuri were migrants to the San Pedro, arriving after the decline of the Hohokam and Salado. Most recently, Lex Lindsay has argued that Kayenta Anasazi made their way to the San Pedro in late prehistoric times with an interim stop in the Point of Pines area north of the Gila River.

### Alternate Perspectives

Migrations are difficult to establish with confidence using archaeological evidence, and one problem is often that insufficient archaeological data make it appear that there was a migration. The San Pedro may be such a case.

Two aspects of the San Pedro are important to keep in mind. First, the San Pedro shows strong similarities to the Hohokam heartland in the Gila River area during Preclassic times (prior to A.D. 1150). The painted pottery is either imported from the Hohokam or is an imitation of Hohokam wares. Furthermore, ballcourts are known almost as far south on the San Pedro as Benson. During the early part of the Hohokam Classic period, about 1150 to 1300, there is little evidence of painted pottery at sites on the San Pedro. This makes sites of this time period difficult to recognize from surface inspection, and it has been interpreted by some as indicating a loss of population. The preliminary surface examinations that we have made, as well as the information from previous excavations, suggest that there may not have been dramatic population shifts, only changes in the archaeological visibility of the San Pedro residents. If this is the case, then the arguments for migrations may not be on such firm ground as originally thought. One of the goals of this survey is to obtain a more complete site inventory in order to evaluate past population fluctuations.

Second, reexamination of previously identified sites on

the San Pedro has shown that there is a series of at least eight large sites along the middle and lower San Pedro that contain platform mounds. Platform mounds frequently started as adobe-walled rooms that were then filled in with boulders and other artificial fill in order to create a raised surface upon which apparent residential structures were built. The significance and function of these impressive structures are the subject of much recent attention. Of interest here is the fact that the San Pedro sites exhibit these features together with the distinctive Salado polychrome pottery, as do large sites in the Phoenix, Tonto Basin, and Tucson areas. The presence of these traits in widely separated areas may indicate that rather than migrations of people into these areas, each area was participating in some sort of larger interaction sphere.

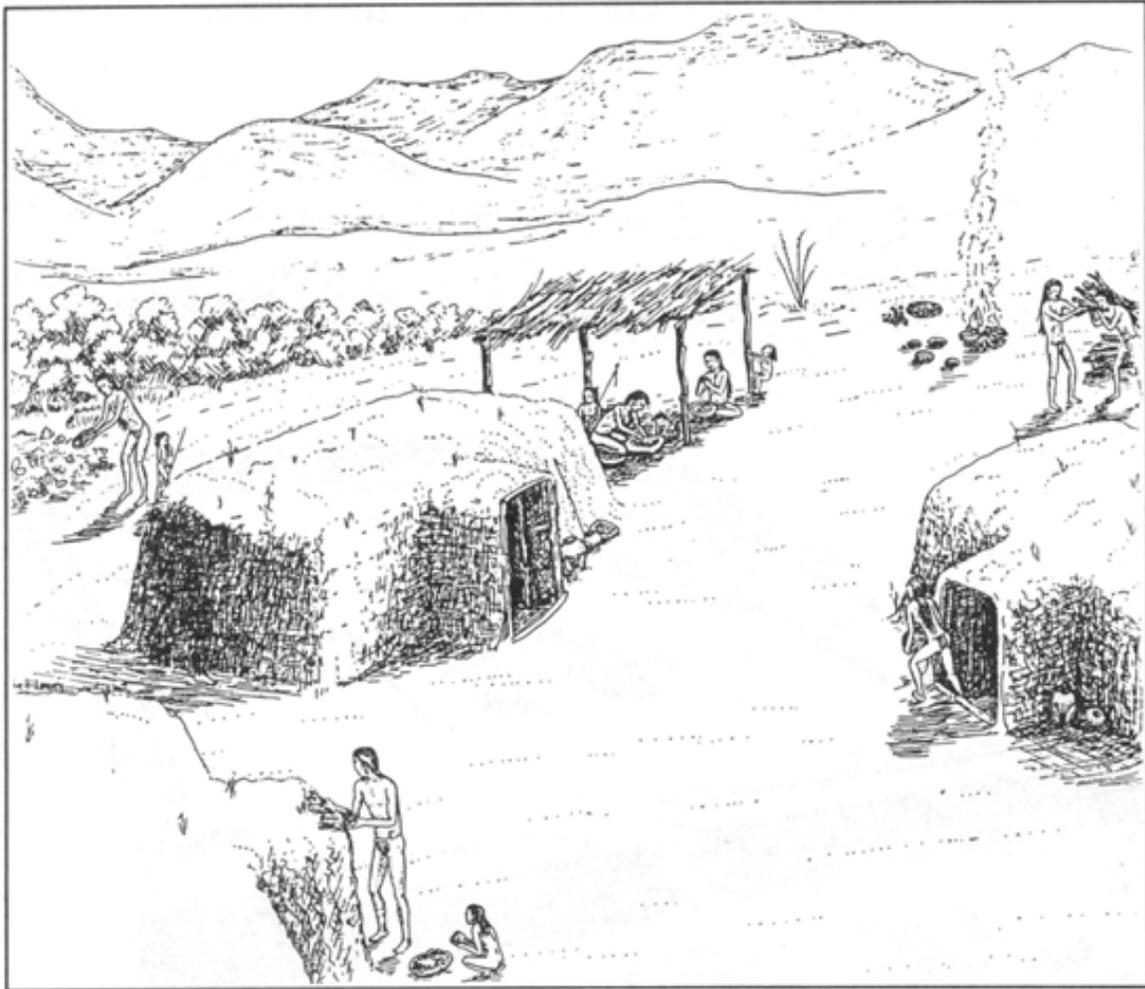
### Known Sites and Survey Goals

It is important to examine the distribution of sites that are already known for the San Pedro. The paired maps on the next page show two slices of time separated by some 300 years. Each map shows the same 50 mile stretch of the San Pedro south of its junction with the Gila River at Winkelman. The largest villages that are known for the late Classic period are already known to occur throughout this area. At least one of these sites is nearly destroyed and many have been heavily disturbed by pothunters. It may be that a few more platform mounds will be found during the upcoming survey, however. It is almost certain that some new compounds, or walled settlements, will be discovered during the survey. These sites will provide a much better understanding of how the communities centered on the platform mounds may have been organized. Some pithouse villages from the early Classic period may also be discovered, which will provide new insights into the developments that preceded the late Classic florescence.

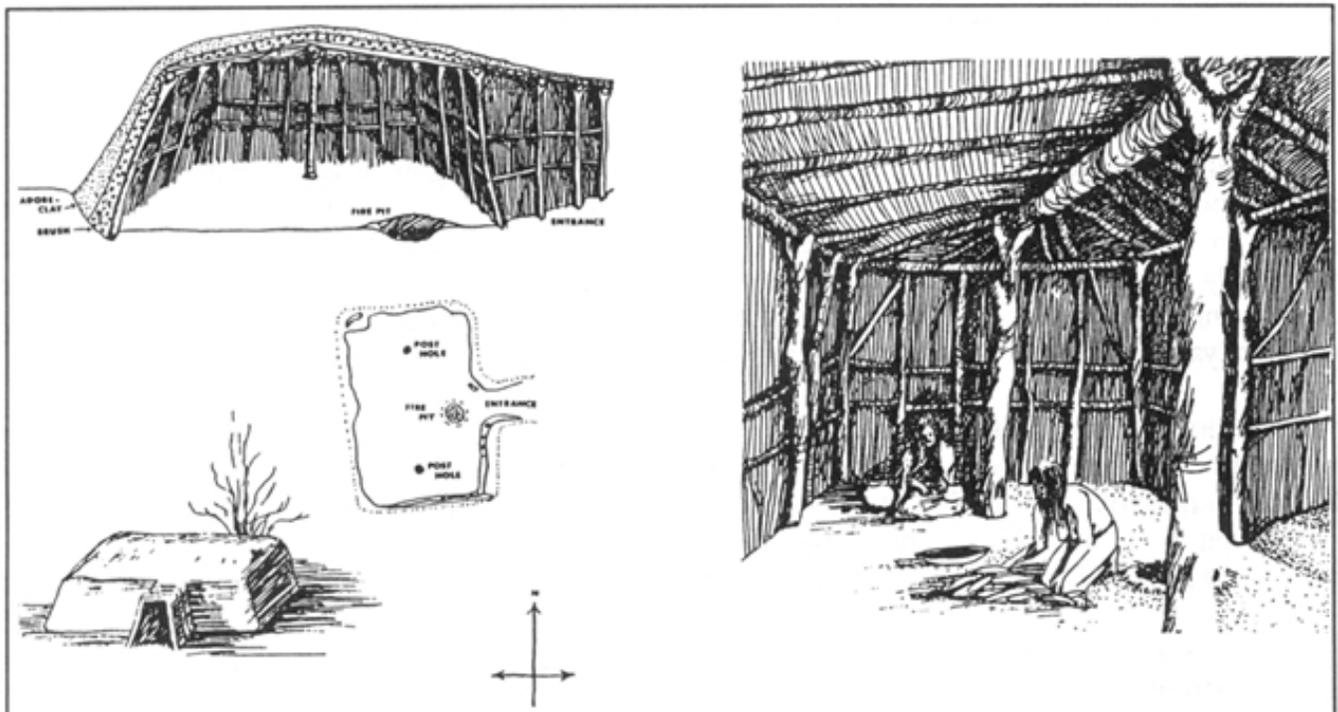
The second map shows the approximate locations of the settlements that Father Kino visited along the San Pedro during the 1690s. Only a couple of sites from this time period have been identified archaeologically in the study area, and they cannot yet be associated with the named settlements recorded by Kino. However, a very important goal of this survey is to keep a particularly sharp eye out for the subtle and unremarkable remains that define the Sobaipuri settlements of early historic times. If we *can* discover these sites and correlate them with historic documents, we will have made a great stride forward. But remember, if this were an easy task, it would have been accomplished long ago.

Once a more complete picture of these two time periods is achieved, then we must try to piece together what occurred during the unknown interval of nearly 300 years. What kinds of archaeological remains should

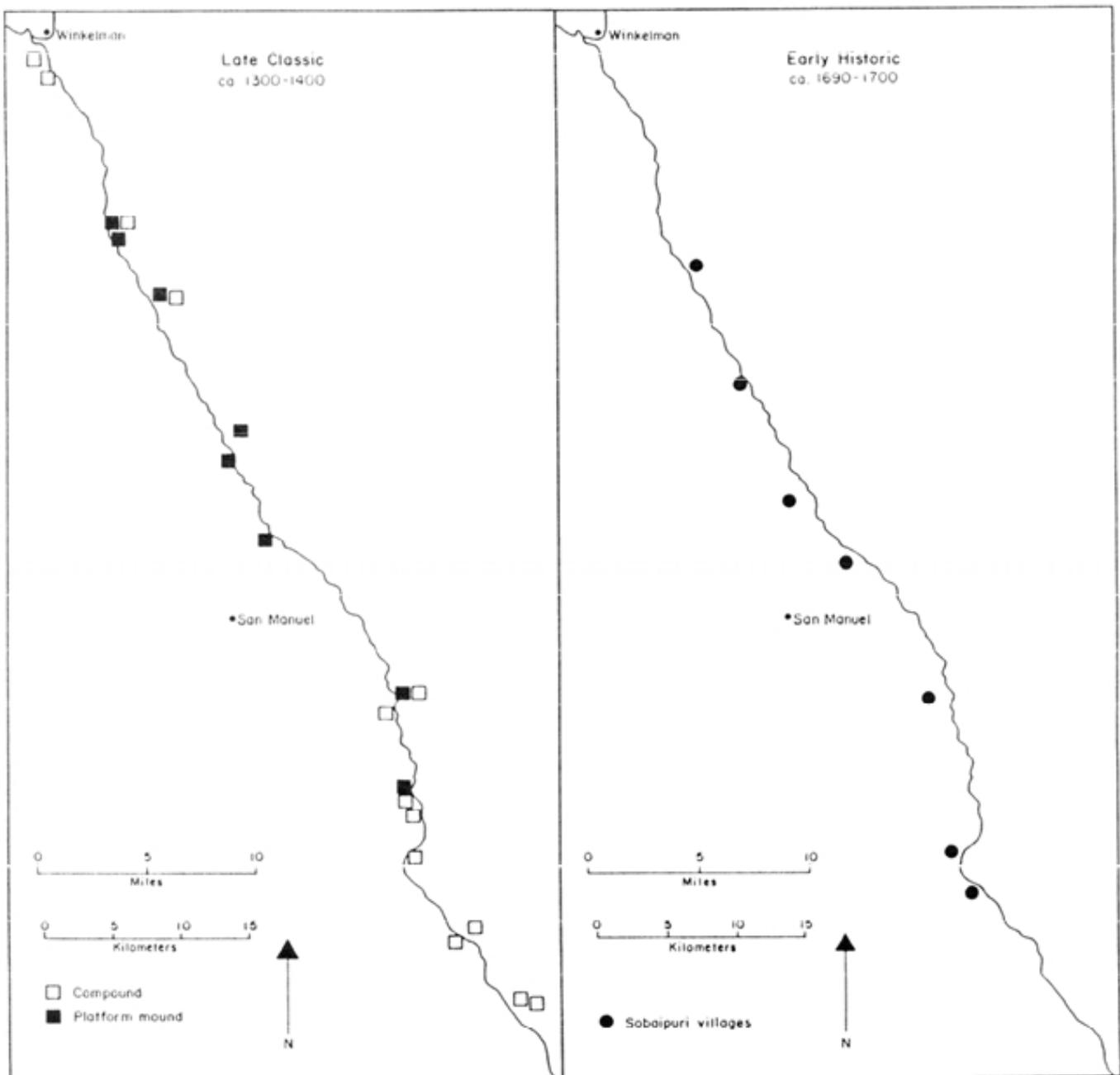
# The Hohokam Pithouse



*Daily activities in a small Hohokam settlement*



*Reconstruction of a Hohokam Pithouse*



*Late Classic sites known to occur along a 50 mile stretch of the San Pedro River south of the Gila River (Winkelman).*

*First approximations of the locations of early historic Sobaipuri villages that were visited by Father Kino and Captain Manje in the 1690s along the San Pedro River.*

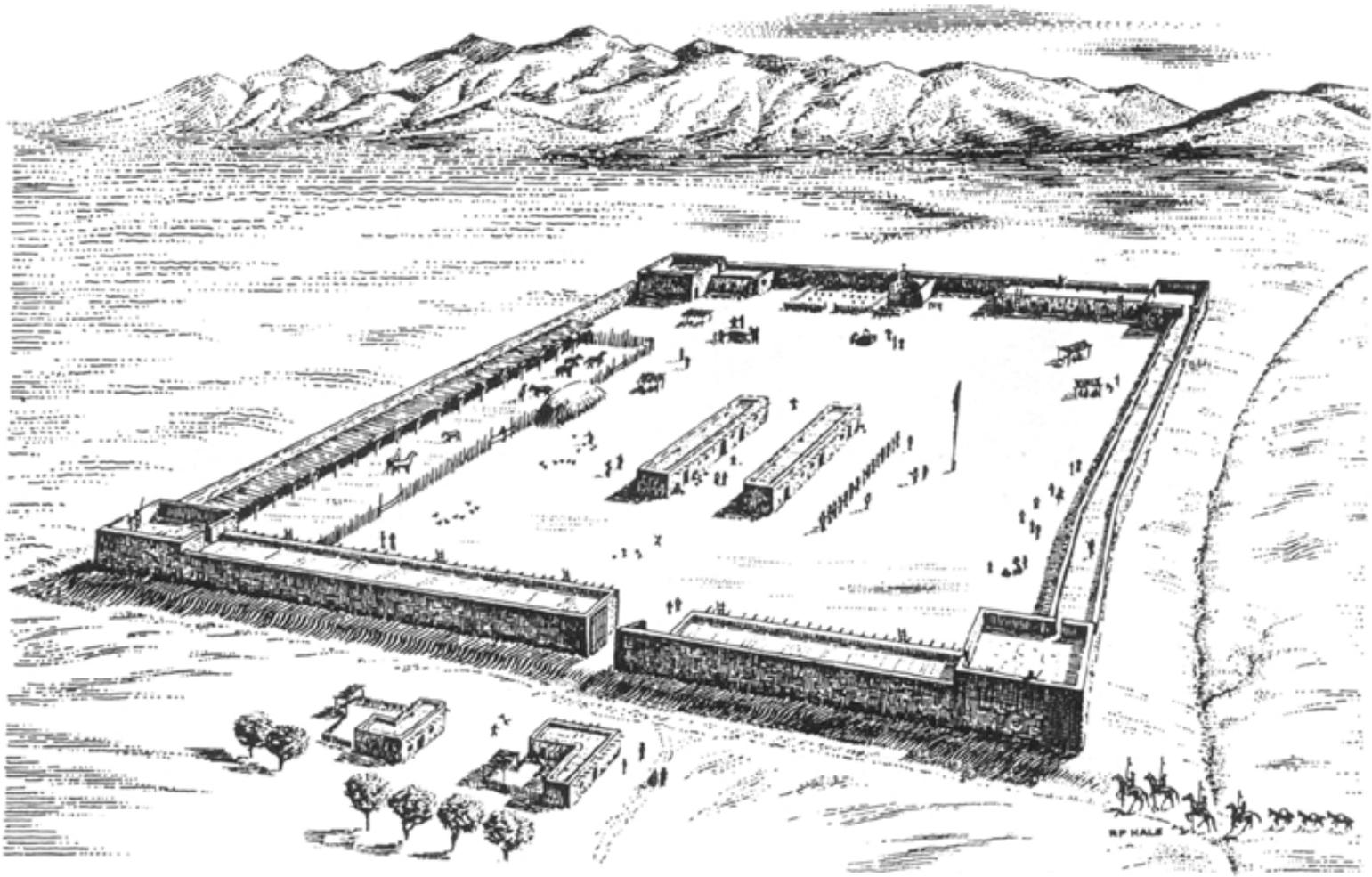
we be looking for? Are there indications of abrupt changes and migrations out of the area or was change more gradual, showing continuities with the past? The upcoming survey will not resolve all of the questions that we can ask now. However, it represents an ideal opportunity to gather a large-scale set of information that can help us see more clearly how these questions might be answered with further work. It is also an excellent opportunity to see some beautiful country, visit spectacular sites, and to enjoy the company of people who are there because of the sheer enjoyment that doing archaeology brings to them.

### Sign Up to Survey

We plan to survey at least seven Saturdays this Spring, beginning on February 3. If you are interested, are in good health (some of the terrain is pretty rugged), and are a current member (or become a member now), please read the enclosed form, and then call Jennifer at 622-6663 to sign up.

Work is likely to continue again in the Fall. So, if your schedule doesn't allow you to participate now, there will be a second chance.

## Tucson's Presidio in the Late 1700s



The west wall of Tucson's Presidio ran along Main Street with a gate where Alameda Street is now located. Opposite the gate, a chapel and the community cemetery were located along the east wall of the Presidio. In January and February 1992, archaeologists from Desert Archaeology, Inc. removed approximately 20 burials from the area. It is now under construction for a gas pipeline. These human remains, dating between about 1780 and the mid-1800s, are now being examined to determine the age, sex, and other physical characteristics of the individuals. These remains will be reburied later this year.

Now archaeologists from Desert Archaeology, Inc. are excavating a 1,100 year old Hohokam pithouse at the intersection of Church and Alameda streets. The area under excavation lies about 100 feet away from the historic cemetery. This pithouse is believed to be part of a prehistoric Hohokam village that was founded as early as AD. 750; it may have been occupied continuously until A.D. 1300. Refuse from Tucson's Presidio and late nineteenth century periods may also be encountered during this project.

This project is sponsored by the City of Tucson's Department of Transportation as part of the upgrading of Alameda street between Church and Stone.

# San Pedro River Survey

Desert Archaeology will be working with *Archaeology in Tucson* members to conduct a reconnaissance level survey of the northern San Pedro River during 1990. The first survey session will run from February 3 through May 5. This will include the following 7 Saturdays: February 3, February 17, March 3, March 17, April 14, April 28, and May 5. If you can participate on two or more of these days, are a current member of *Archaeology in Tucson*, and are in good physical condition, then please get in contact with us as soon as possible. Please call Jennifer at 622-6663 to leave your name, telephone number(s), and a list of possible survey days. We will work out a specific schedule for field teams and will get back in touch with you.

Also, please indicate if you are willing to drive your vehicle to the survey area. Round trip distance from Tucson will probably be from 100-120 miles for a day. Much of the access to survey areas is by paved or well-maintained gravel roads. There are some areas where four-wheel drive may be necessary, and we will provide vehicles for those areas.

There will be a brief written description of survey methods and procedures that will be available to project participants in late January. We will also schedule participants so that there is a good mix of persons who have previous experience with those who have done little or no previous survey. So you do not need to feel concern if you haven't done this before.

We will also expect participants to sign a liability waiver and to sign an agreement that no personal collections will be taken from the project area either during or following this project. The goal of this project is to enhance the preservation of the archaeology that remains in the San Pedro River, and it is critical that all participants share in that goal.

We look forward to hearing from you.

## AIT EVENTS CALENDAR

*The Ancient Hohokam of Southern Arizona*

Wednesday, January 10 at 7:30 PM. Speaker: William H. Doelle, Executive Director, Center for Desert Archaeology.

*The Salado: Pueblo Builders of the Tonto Basin*

Wednesday, February 7 at 7:30 PM. Speaker: Mark D. Elson, Research Archaeologist, Center for Desert Archaeology.

*Petroglyphs of the Southern Arizona Desert*

Monday, March 5 at 7:30 PM. Speaker: Henry D. Wallace, Research Archaeologist, Center for Desert Archaeology.

*Field trip to Cerro Prieto*

Saturday, March 24. 8 AM - 4 PM. Visit a large Classic period Hohokam site built on a hillslope northwest of Tucson. Also visit a nearby petroglyph site. Tour leaders: Chris Downum and Henry Wallace. For members only.

All lectures will be held in DuVal Auditorium (Room 2600) at University Hospital. There is convenient parking in the parking garage north of the hospital. Turn west on Elm from Campbell, and proceed one block to the parking garage. There is an elevated walkway that leads right to the front entrance of the hospital. Turn right after entering the hospital, and the auditorium will be on your left after a short walk.

Invite a friend to attend our lectures. Let's all help to build up the membership as quickly as possible.

# Membership Application

## Archaeology in Tucson Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Membership Dues Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual Membership Rates

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

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

### MAIL TO:

**Center for Desert Archaeology**  
245 South Plumer, Suite 14  
Tucson, AZ 85719  
602-622-6663

## **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

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