Our Fragile Legacy

Preserving the Spirit of Peoples Past and Present

America's past is *everyone's* legacy. It is a *fragile* legacy, and its protection and preservation are *everyone's* responsibilities. By learning about preservation laws and the reasons behind them, we can all help to preserve America's cultural heritage.

Apache ancestors moved into the Southwest around A.D. 1500. This Western Apache olla was made between 1910 and 1925. On loan from Bernard Spitz. Photograph by Douglas Kahn. Courtesy of Laboratory of Anthropology/ Museum of Indian Arts & Culture.

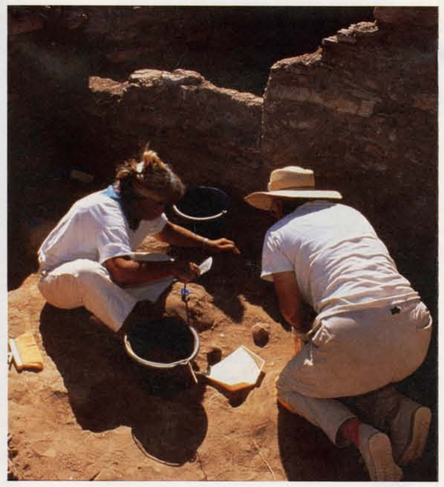
In the American Southwest, this legacy is a cultural mosaic. When the Spaniards arrived in the 1500s, they met many native peoples who had been here for thousands of years. Subsequently, some American Indian groups remained in their original homelands, while others changed locations. Some groups lived in villages and towns, while others belonged to migratory bands. Many languages were spoken. Tribal customs differed from those of the Spanish and more recent European arrivals—and, often, from tribe to tribe. Spanish and American Indian traditions are part of the heritage that makes the American Southwest unique.

European expansion and recent development involving activities such as the plowing of fields, grazing, and the construction of new buildings, dams, and roads destroyed evidence of earlier use of this land. Even excavating archaeological sites (no matter who does it) is destructive.

By the time that citizens and the government decided to preserve artifacts and sites around the turn of the 20th century, many American Indian and non-Indian sites had already been destroyed, buried, or otherwise lost. To help preserve remaining sites, several laws were passed to protect antiquities on federal, tribal, state, and municipal lands. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 protects human burials and associated funerary materials, as well as sacred and objects of cultural patrimony on federal, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian lands. We now recognize that the sites and objects representing America's cultural heritage deserve our respect and protection—because they are *our* fragile legacy.

Rediscovering America's Past

Learning about the past cultural values and traditions of all American ethnic groups involves consultation with descendants whose knowledge has been passed down through generations; examination of early accounts and more recent historical records, including photographs and art objects; and study of archaeological remains. Many people are helping, including American Indians and other ethnic groups, researchers of contemporary culture groups, historians, members of local communities, and archaeologists. In combination with oral history and historical documentation, archaeological survey and the excavation of American Indian pueblos, early colonial churches and villages, and historic industrial sites tell us how people lived.

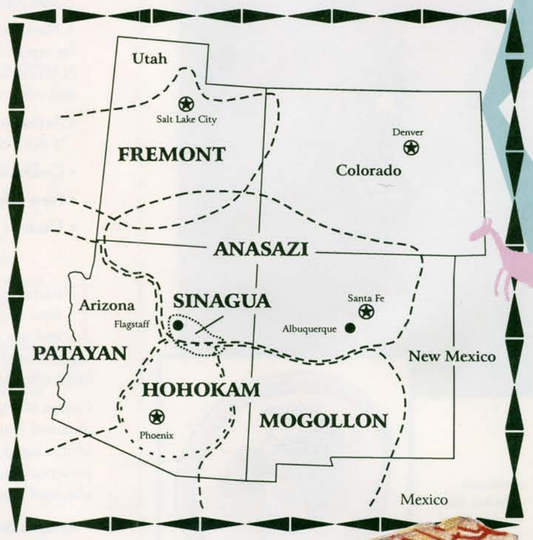


Archaeologists from the Arizona State Museum map objects from the floor of an ancestral Hopi pueblo at Homolovi Ruins State Park near Winslow, Arizona. Photograph by Jens Jensen. Courtesy of the Hopi Tribe/Cultural Preservation Office.

A tiny fragment of distinctive pottery can indicate the presence of a specific group of people and, through the use of sophisticated dating techniques, can reveal the approximate dates when people lived in the location in which it was found. A shred of cloth could indicate that the people may have grown cotton. A small fragment of wood can be used to infer past vegetation and climate, as well as to determine species of trees used for building homes, for firewood, or for making tools.

Someday we're going to be ancestors ourselves. That's important. And we want the people in the future to say our ancestors thought enough about us to keep this land intact.

Bill Weahkee
Executive Director
Five Sandoval Indian Pueblos, Inc.
New Mexico

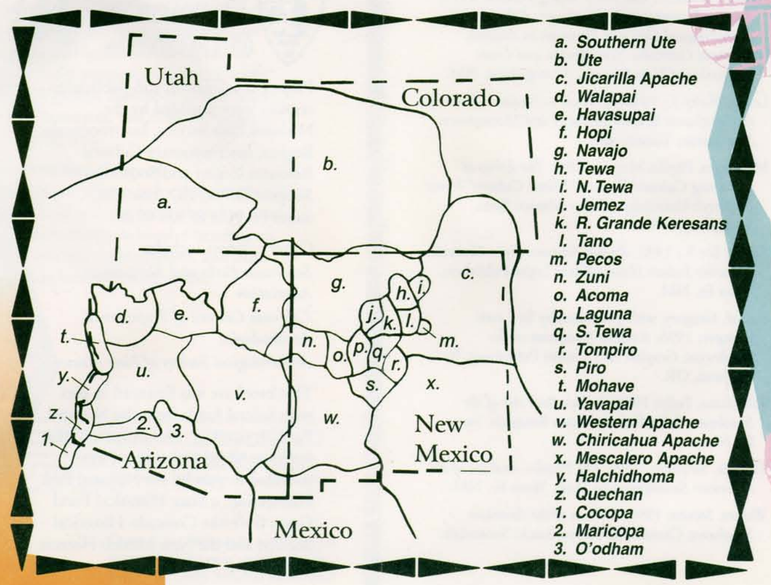


Prehistoric archaeological culture areas.

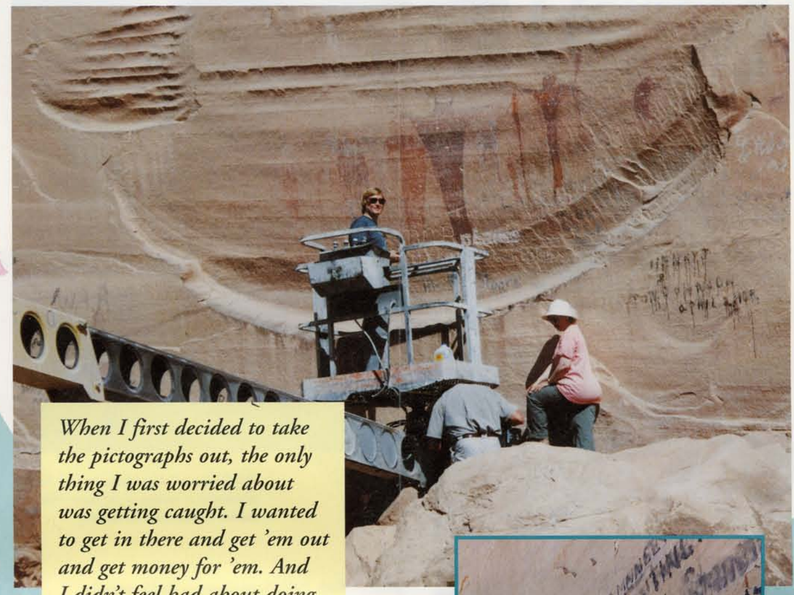
American Indian Concerns

For many American Indians, places and objects that non-Indians term "archaeological sites" and "artifacts" are alive with ancestral and other spirits, and therefore are infused with special traditional, ceremonial, sacred, and other cultural meanings. The past is not the background to the present that it is for many non-Indians, but rather is part of the present. House mounds, petroglyphs, springs, shrines, trail markers, landmarks, and unusual landscape features, as well as artifacts of clay, stone, bone, fiber, and shell, belonged to ancestors, and can serve as channels through which the past becomes part of the present. Many Southwestern Indians take strong exception when others speak of the "disappearance" of their ancestors. They believe that the people who lived in prehistoric sites simply moved away, in many cases to places that are still occupied by their descendants.

Recent American Indian concerns focus on protecting ancestral burial sites and human remains, as well as providing for the return of some sacred artifacts to appropriate tribal authorities. Many American Indian tribes initiate their own anthropological studies. Sometimes they work with other professionals to verify oral traditions, to manage sensitive ancestral sites, or to substantiate claims to former homelands.

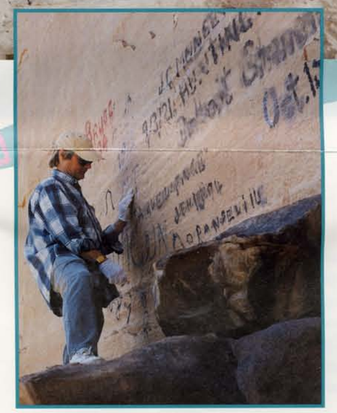


Historic American Indian tribal territories.



When I first decided to take the pictographs out, the only thing I was worried about was getting caught. I wanted to get in there and get 'em out and get money for 'em. And I didn't feel bad about doing it. When I came back, I realized how bad it was—how terrible it looked. It was kind of like ripping the Mona Lisa out of her frame. I ruined something that shouldn't have been touched. It should have been left like it was, and I really messed it up.

Patrick Williams
Former Looter



Fragile rock paintings and carvings are particularly vulnerable to vandalism—and even theft. These life-sized human figures were painted in Buckhorn Wash, Utah, approximately 2,000 years ago, by people representing the Barrier Canyon Culture. Many recent signatures, carvings, and bullet holes were removed during a restoration program in 1995 that involved volunteers from Emery County communities, the Bureau of Land Management, and state and local governments. Photographs by Reed Martin.

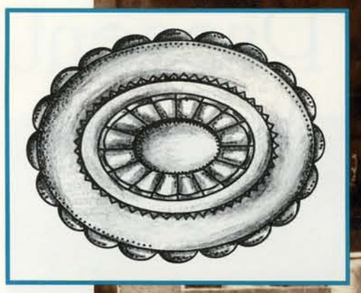
Laws Preserving Our Past

Preservation laws protect and preserve historic and prehistoric archaeological resources. The remains of structures, rock-pile cairns, trash deposits, tepee rings, trail markers, fire hearths, and kilns, as well as pictographs (paintings) and petroglyphs (carvings), are important protected resources. Artifacts include complete and fragmentary containers, clothing, ornaments, tools, and weapons. Even potsherds, rock fragments, beads, and other materials found lying on the ground surface or eroding out of archaeological sites or nearby arroyo banks are protected by these preservation laws. These archaeological materials are permanently stored, along with records and information about them, and are often used in exhibits, educational programs, and further research.

Preservation laws stipulate that only those with permits may dig in archaeological sites. The laws applying to federal and tribal lands include the Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 and amendments. Those who violate federal archaeological preservation laws can be prosecuted. Federal felony, misdemeanor, and civil convictions can result in vehicle confiscation, fines to cover site restoration costs, and imprisonment.

Sites are destroyed every day in the course of progress, through vandalism, or by natural forces. Most states have their own laws that provide criminal and civil penalties for appropriating, excavating, removing, or destroying archaeological resources on state lands. Many states enforce burial laws designed to protect human remains and associated materials found on private property. Even some municipalities enforce special ordinances that protect archaeological sites on their lands.

Preservation-wise Collecting

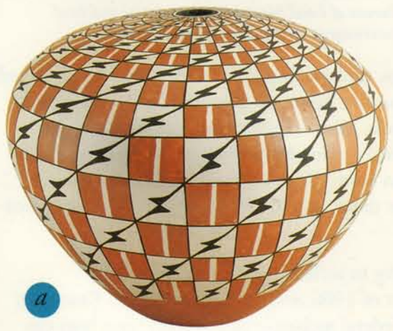


"Little Hunter's Granddaughter," a Navajo silversmith. Courtesy of the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial Association.

Early 1900s Santo Domingo Pueblo turquoise necklace. Photograph by Blair Clark. Courtesy of School of American Research Collections in the Museum of New Mexico.

The desire for knowledge about human history runs deep. So does the urge to collect objects representing people who have gone before us. Looting continues to be a problem on all lands, and illegal artifacts do find their way into the market. Nevertheless, more people now understand the importance of preserving archaeological sites and their artifacts for the future and are instead choosing to pursue preservation-wise alternatives.

Collecting contemporary American Indian art provides its own very special excitement and rewards: modern-day Indian paintings, sculpture, and crafts are highly artistic and decorative. Baskets, rugs, blankets, pots, and jewelry are useful as well as attractive. Many modern



a

pieces reveal strong connections with the past through themes, styles, and design elements and techniques. As a collector, you can specialize in particular artists, tribes, or regions—or in topical favorites such as ceramic storytellers or turquoise jewelry. You can sometimes meet artists at tribal arts-and-crafts shows, events like Santa Fe's world-famous Indian Market, museums, and the shops of art dealers.

Or you can purchase commercial photographs and books, take your own photographs (with permission), and look and enjoy to your heart's content.

b

Prehistoric Mogollon and Anasazi pottery-making methods and painting techniques have been incorporated into these pieces.

a. Acoma Pueblo polychrome seed jar made by Rose Chino in 1984.

b. San Ildefonso Pueblo polychrome seed jar made by Crucita Calabaza in 1976.

Courtesy of Laboratory of Anthropology/Museum of Indian Arts & Culture

Prehistoric Mimbres Black-on-white bowl (artist's rendering is based on 1924 illustration by J. Walter Fewkes) served as the model for a stretched leather work (for which F. Sharpe won first prize at the 1954 Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial in Gallup). Photograph by Lisa Wallace. Courtesy of Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial Association.

Recommended Reading

Feest, Christian F.; 1992; *Native Arts of North America;* Thames and Hudson, London.

Folsom, Franklin, and Mary Elting Folsom; 1994; *Ancient Treasures of the Southwest: A Guide to Archaeological Sites and Museums in Arizona, Southern Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah;* University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

Leach, Nicky J.; 1992; *A Guide to National Parks of the Southwest;* Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, Tucson, AZ.

Messenger, Phyllis Mauch; 1989; *The Ethics of Collecting Cultural Property: Whose Culture? Whose Property?;* University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM.

Sando, Joe S.; 1992; *Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History;* Clear Light Publishers, Santa Fe, NM.

Schaaf, Gregory, with photography by Lewis Kemper; 1996; Ancient Ancestors of the Southwest; Graphic Arts Center Publishing, Inc., Portland, OR.

Schaafsma, Polly; 1980; *Indian Rock Art of the Southwest;* School of American Research, Santa Fe, NM.

Trimble, Stephen; 1993; *The People—Indians of the American Southwest;* Star Press, Santa Fe, NM.

Walker, Steven; 1994; *Indians of the American Southwest;* Camelback/Canyonlands, Scottsdale, AZ.

To Report Illegal Activities, Call:

National Parks, Nationwide:
1-800-2ARPA86 (227-7286).

A National Park Service 24-hour line for reporting resource crimes (ARPA/NAGPRA, poaching, digging fossils, and other violations).

- **Arizona** *1-800-VANDALS (826-3257)*
- **Colorado** *1-303-866-3395*
- **New Mexico** *1-505-827-6320*
- **Utah** *1-800-722-3998*

Federal agencies work cooperatively with state and local law-enforcement agencies and use undercover operations and highly sophisticated surveillance equipment to apprehend offenders.

Copies of federal and state laws can be obtained from the state historic preservation offices listed below. Information about Indian preservation and protection laws can be obtained from tribal preservation offices.

- **Arizona State Historic Preservation Office**
  % Arizona State Parks
  1300 West Washington
  Phoenix, AZ 85007
- **Colorado State Historic Preservation Office**
  % Colorado Historical Society
  1300 Broadway
  Denver, CO 80203
- **New Mexico Office of Cultural Affairs**
  Historic Preservation Division
  228 East Palace
  Santa Fe, NM 87503
- **Utah State Historic Preservation Office**
  % Utah State Historical Society
  300 Rio Grande
  Salt Lake City, UT 84101

Preparers & Partners

Project coordination and publication services were provided by the National Park Service, Intermountain Region, Intermountain Cultural Resource Center and Southwest Support Office, P.O. Box 728, Santa Fe, NM 87504-0728.

Other partners include:
Southwest Parks and Monuments Association
Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists
Archaeological Society of New Mexico

This brochure was financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service/U.S. Department of the Interior. Additional support was provided in part by the National Park Foundation, a State Historical Fund Grant from the Colorado Historical Society, and the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division.

Getting Involved

Here are some ways *you* can get involved in helping to preserve our fragile legacy:

By visiting local museums.
You can see the past come to life in exhibits—from large urban museums to roadside points of interest.

By teaching your children.
You can encourage teachers in your community to educate your children about historic preservation—an excellent springboard for introducing concepts like scientific inquiry, the issues and ethics of conservation, cultural diversity, and problem solving. Recognizing the historical significance of ordinary objects helps young people make a personal connection to the past, and promotes respect for other people. Teacher's guides that integrate archaeology are available from some federal agencies and state historic preservation offices.

By supporting preservation organizations.
You can support the many organizations working on state and local levels. Groups like The Archaeological Conservancy acquire and permanently preserve endangered sites all over the country. Other volunteer groups often work with state and local governments to encourage developers to preserve archaeological sites within planned developments—a practice that not only preserves the sites for the future, but also gives developers certain advantages, such as tax deductions, favorable publicity, and even added value to their land.

By volunteering.
For exciting hands-on experience in excavation, artifact processing, and analysis, you can contact local archaeological societies, contracting firms, or government agencies. Such groups work under permits, collaborate with cultural groups associated with archaeological resources, and offer site stewardship programs.

By spreading the word.
You can participate in local archaeological events; and you can lend a hand in local grassroots efforts to involve newspapers, television and radio stations, and other media in historic preservation.

Cover photo: Archeologist examining jar recovered during ruins stabilization in Canyon de Chelly National Monument. Courtesy of National Park Service.