

“Prehistoric Occupation of the St. George Area”

By

Robert Nash

Bighorn Archaeology Consultants

Presented to Dixie Archaeology Society

March 14, 2012

Robert discussed the various periods of prehistory of the southwest in general and the St. George basin in particular, using examples from archaeological digs performed by his company to illustrate the various periods of occupation in the St. George area. He also discussed the social implications that resulted for the advancements in technology from period to period.

Paleo Indian:

This period lasted from 13500 BC to about 7000 BC.

The **Clovis Point** people were hunters using spears to hunt very large game. They are identified by the “Clovis Point”, a very particular style of spear point. This period lasted from 13500 BC to 12900 BC.

The **Western Stemmed Point Tradition** lasted from 13000 BC to about 7000 BC and was concentrated in the Great Basin. Here the people were nomadic with some settlements for subsistence hunting and gathering. These paleo-archaic people developed the atlatl technology along with knives and scrapers.

There is evidence of the Paleo-Archaic presence in St. George from a site along the Southern Parkway where a obsidian point was found that was dated to 9900 – 12700 BC. The obsidian was traced to the Mount Topaz region of Utah, a distance of about 150 miles from St. George.

Archaic:

The **Early Archaic** period lasted from 7000 to 4200 BC and consisted of small settlements with subsistence hunting and gathering. Settlements were in caves or near wetlands. The technology consisted of milling stones, coiled baskets, dart points with a large focus on plant seeds.

The **Middle Archaic** period lasted from 4200 – 2600 BC. The settlements consisted of shallow pit houses concentrated in water areas. The subsistence was still hunting and gathering with an emphasis on deer, fish, rabbits and plants.

The **Late Archaic** period was from 2600 – 300 BC. The major technology change was a different style point. Social changes were also occurring in that the people began making figurines from Twigg, mostly in the form of deer and sheep.

Many areas in the St. George are date to 3000 – 4000 BC. These include areas along the **Southern Parkway** where white quartz chips and evidence of wikiups were found. The **Red Butte** area had wikiups and agave roasting pits. The **Beaver Dam Mountains** had roasting pits. The **Leucadia** site (near the new airport) had wikiups, some with a central hearth, that date to 2000 – 2600 BC. Also found was adobe and a diverse collection of tools. The major food was rabbits (not much deer) and seeds.

Formative Period (Virgin Anasazi):

The **Basket Maker II** period lasted from 300 BC to 450 AD. These people began to settle into a farming culture. They had corn and squash for food. They used metates and the atlatl for hunting. They had no ceramics or bow and arrows. They used spears and nets to hunt rabbits. They had textiles. They had a variety of stone tools. They had larger pit houses, with multiple roof poles. The pit houses had storage pits within the pit house structure. This signaled a major social change – the people had taken personal ownership of resources.

The **Basket Maker III** period lasted from 450 – 750 AD. These people added beans to their food supply. They also had the bow and arrow and ceramics. The pit houses became more subterranean. They also utilized outside storage rooms in addition to those with the pit houses. The advent of the bow and arrow made hunting a more solitary event, increasing the emphasis on individualism.

The **Pueblo I** period lasted from 750 – 900 AD. There was a dramatic increase in population during this period. As a consequence large communities were formed. The people domesticated the turkey as a food source. The ceramic technology improved.

The **Pueblo II** period lasted from 900 – 1250 AD. The people developed ways to manage their water supply – mostly by building check dams. They also developed corrugated pottery. The changes in the communities involved the used of both pit houses and communal structures (kivas).

Various sites in the **Kanab region** have kivas and pit houses. The **Leucadia site** has shelters in caves and ledges. Shell beads (olivella shell from the pacific coast) were found.

Late Prehistoric:

The late prehistoric period lasted from 1250 – Present. During this time the Numic speaking peoples (Utes and Paiutes) migrated into the region from California. There was a return to a higher mobility society, again using wikiups versus pit houses. There was more reliance on hunting and gathering rather than farming. The people developed

unique basketry (seed beaters and winnowing trays) to harvest seeds at a higher rate. They also developed technology to process the seeds more efficiently. Their ceramics were cruder, thicker, in order to survive the mobile lifestyle. The pinion nut was as important to these people as corn was to earlier populations.

John Mangels