

Carol Patterson
"Petroglyphs of Western Colorado and the Northern Ute Indian Reservation as
Interpreted by Clifford Duncan"
Dixie Archeology Society
Meeting on November 9, 2016

Our club got the opportunity to hear Carol Patterson present the contents of her new book Petroglyphs of Western Colorado and the Northern Ute Indian Reservation as Interpreted by Clifford Duncan (2016).

Archaeologist Carol Patterson was Adjunct Professor for Colorado Mesa University and Metropolitan State University, Colorado. She is principal investigator for URRACA Archaeology, Montrose, Colorado. She has authored many articles and books including On the Trail of the Spiderwoman: Pictographs and Petroglyphs of the Southwest (1997). She spends much of her time researching rock art in eastern Utah and Western Colorado.

Clifford Duncan, a Northern Ute elder, believed in educating the public to know and understand the meaning of Ute petroglyphs. By doing this, he believed it would help to preserve and protect them. Early in his life he traveled by car, on foot and on horseback through the Uncompahgre Plateau and later visited the Uintah Ouray Reservation (White River Ute). Carol Patterson's book supplements his interpretations of the petroglyphs in these two locations with their cultural and political histories and additional ethnographic information.

Many of the Ute peoples were moved from Colorado to Utah reservations after the Meeker Massacre in 1881. Stories kept by the Utes allow interpretation of older Colorado rock art as well as younger Ute rock art through interviews with cultural representatives such as Duncan, who lived much of his long life in Utah.

In order to understand the language and meanings of the Ute petroglyphs, one must look at them through the eyes of the Ute culture. Carol discussed various panels and their meanings, both in Colorado and Utah. There were depictions of ceremony, maps tracing river drainages, horses from the viewpoint of a rider, the body positions and attitudes of human figures, bear dances and stories, train wrecks and many others. It was interesting to note that some of the petroglyphs, particularly in Utah were historical – 300 years or more recent.

All symbols have meaning. We appreciated Clifford Duncan for sharing those meanings and for Carol Patterson to memorialize Clifford's words. Clifford recently passed, so we are grateful that Carol was able to capture his interpretations and his wisdom.