

“Little Creek; 1979 to 2004”

by

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Barbara Frank is the curator of the Archaeology Repository at Southern Utah University. Barbara also is an archaeologist / researcher who ran the SUU Archaeology Field School. In this capacity, she and her team studied a number of sites on Little Creek Mesa from 1979 to 2004. She also worked sites in Colorado City and sites along Highway 59.

She explained that Dr. Richard Thompson started the SUU field school program in 1961 and ran the program to 1995. Barbara took over the program in 1984.

The sites on Little Creek Mesa are Virgin Anasazi / Puebloan dating from 900 to 1200 AD (early to late P2 period). Most are small habitation and storage sites that would have held a single extended family. The largest site would have held 40 to 50 people at most. The people were farmers who practiced dry farming relying on rainfall and springs (generally located where the stock ponds are currently located). There is evidence of domesticated dogs and turkeys.

The people would have lived to 35 to 40 years old. They have evidence of a lot of tuberculous due to smoke from fires. They also had very bad teeth due the large amount of “sand / gravel” in their food.

These people would have occupied a site for 15 to 25 years. They would have then been forced to move due to the general depletion of resources – soil, trees, game, etc. They would perhaps return to the site in 2-3 generations.

Generally, the Anasazi would build their habitation sites according to a rigid plan. However, there was much more diversity in the Virgin Anasazi site plans on Little Creek Mesa. There was a transition from pit houses to surface habitation sites during the occupation of Little Creek.

Barbara speculated that there were at most 500 people living on Little Creek Mesa at any one time. The type of artifacts found in these sites consisted of gray ware, black on gray and corrugated pottery along with trade goods such as turquoise, shell beads and abalone shells. Interestingly, she noted that that there was no pottery from Moapa and no obsidian.

Barbara discussed the various sites she excavated in some detail. She described the numbering system – 42 is for Utah, WS is for Washington County and 961 is the site number. She said that Washington County has over 8000 numbered sites, Iron County over 5000 and San Juan County over 20000.

Site 42WS961:

Barbara called this the tunnel site because there was a small “tunnel” or air shaft in place. This was a pit house structure with storage room blocks. Barbara said the rock walls on the storage rooms were 4 to 5 feet in height. The walls would have been covered with a “mud” type plaster on both the outside and inside.

42WS1185:

This site consisted of a series of 10 to 11 storage rooms. The site was dated to 900 to 1050 AD.

42WS1331:

This was a pit house and storage room site.

42WS1319:

The site consisted of storage rooms.

42WS920:

This site is called the “mix master” site. This site had 5 to 6 periods of occupation over the years 500 to 1200 AD. This site may have had a kiva. There was a structure with a pit about 5 feet deep – down to the caliche level. The kiva’s in the Virgin Anasazi area do not normally have sipapu’s.

42WS881:

This site consists of two separate areas that were dated to 1050 to 1300 AD.

42WS4145:

This site is called “Roland’s Roost”. It is a “field” house or farm house and was set up for 1 to 2 people.

42WS1191:

This was a P1 site dating from 700 to 900 AD. It was a one family site – about 10 people.

The artifacts from the Little Creek sites are stored at the SUU Archaeological Repository.

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John Mangels

