The Uncompahgre Journal

February 2024 CHIPETA CHAPTER OF THE COLORADO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY Volume 41 Issue 2

Mark Your Calendar

Feb 6: Hisatsinom Chapter monthly meeting with Cory Breternitz on Bis sa' ani, a Chaco great house excavated in the 1980s. First United Methodist Church, 515 N Park St, Cortez, 7:00. This meeting will also be on Zoom.

Feb 7: Montrose County Historical Society monthly meeting with Emily Sanchez, Assistant County Manager, on the County Courthouse restoration. Rooms 1 and 2, Montrose County Events Center, 7:00 pm.

Feb 14: San Juan Basin Archaeological Society monthly meeting with Bonnie Clark on gardens and gardeners in a Japanese American incarceration camp. Lyceum, Center of SW Studies, Fort Lewis College, 7:00 pm. This is a hybrid talk/webinar.

Feb 21: Chipeta Chapter monthly meeting with Dennis DeVore on canines in rock art (***right***). Montrose United Methodist Church, 19 S Park Ave, 7:00 pm.

Feb 28: CAS Grand Junction monthly meeting with Carl Conner on bison hunting near Meeker 1700 years ago. Redlands United Methodist Church, 527 Village Way, Grand Junction, 6:30 pm.

Our February Presentation

Canines in Rock Art – Wolves, Coyotes, and Mostly Dogs

by Dennis DeVore

Starting about 11,000 years ago, canine figures began to appear in the rock art of western North America. These images include true domestic dogs and the common wild species—the wolves and coyotes. By observing canine tail positions, it is possible to differentiate among these species. The presentation will reflect on the archaeology and origin of domestic dogs and show canine variations as depicted in rock art.

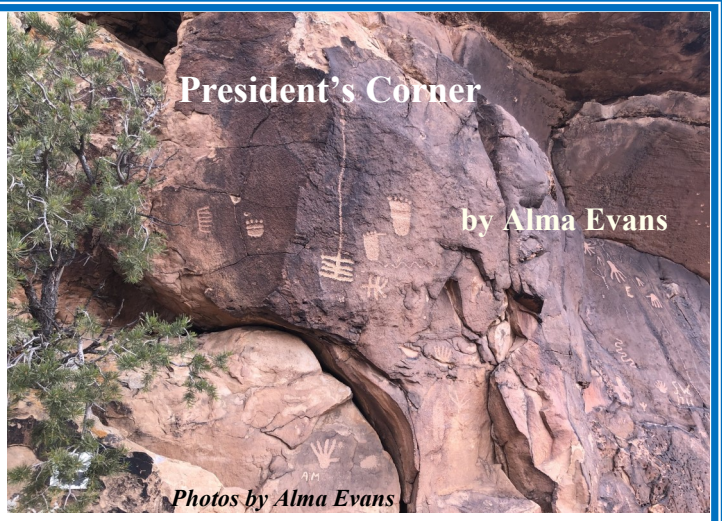
Photo courtesy of Dennis DeVore

Dennis DeVore is a Colorado native and lives in Grand Junction. His first adventure in rock art was in 1982 while working in Craig, Colorado – a day-trip that sparked a lifelong interest. He graduated from Colorado State University in 1976 with a BS in Economics, followed by a career in real estate appraisal, retiring in 2004. He is a former board member of the Chipeta Chapter of CAS. His article "Canine Tails – Rock Art Semaphores" was published in 2022 in American Indian Rock Art, Volume 47.

Photo by Bill Harris

President's Corner

by Alma Evans



Photos by Alma Evans

When approaching Delta from Grand Junction, there is a road sign which reads "Ute Council Tree"—a sign often seen but seldom causing a reaction. This day was different. Without a second thought, I turned right and proceeded to follow the sign. There it was: a large sign announcing that I had found the Ute Council Tree. It was just a stump. An impressive twelve-foot-tall stump with a base circumference of over seven feet. It had been a massive tree. I was in a small subdivision with no place to park without blocking a driveway. I turned my vehicle around and was able to park across the street without blocking any drive. Good! What's the big deal anyway? It's just an old tree stump.

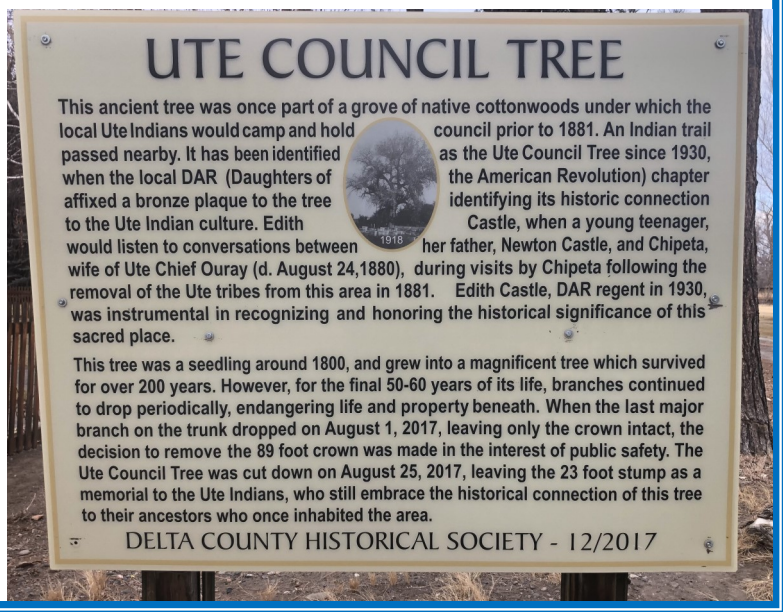
I stood in front of the large stump and looked up at the jagged broken top. I walked around its still-large trunk. Without thinking, I suddenly turned around, leaned against that shell that had been a mighty tree, my back touching the bark, and looked south. In times past, the confluence of the Uncompahgre and Gunnison Rivers would have been seen from this vantage point.

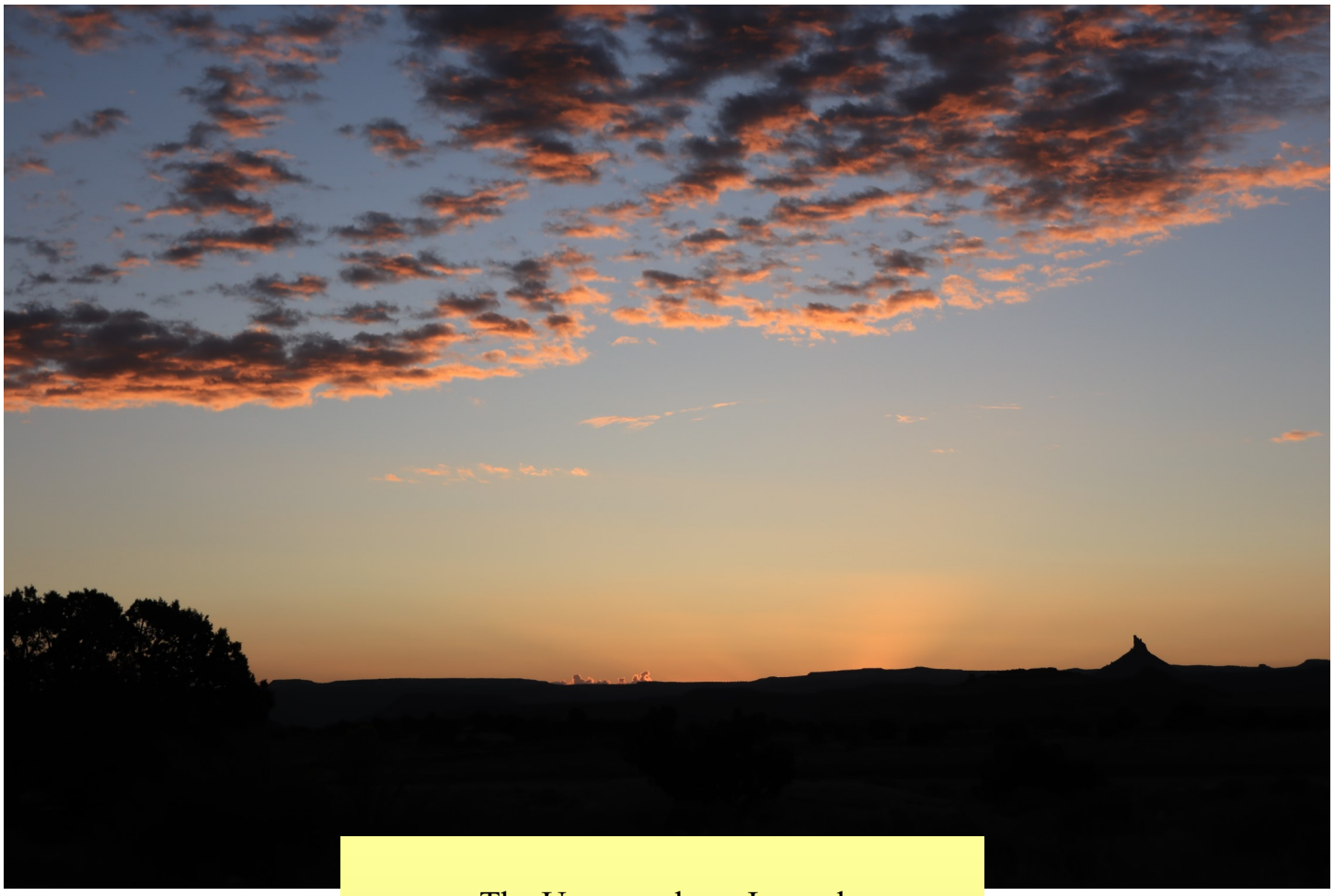
I closed my eyes, and in my mind I began to see a happy gathering. Children playing on the gentle sloping bank of the Gunnison River. Mothers bringing water back for their cooking pots. Cooling themselves in the water before finishing their tasks. An easy walk back to the camp. Plenty of cottonwood trees in this lush grove. The women choosing the best places for a teepee. The trees had laid down a soft cushion of fallen leaves for walking. The trees also provided protection from the weather and the provision of soft bedding for a fine night's sleep. In my mind, I saw the verdant pasture full of Indian ponies. Plenty of grass and water to fill the appetites of a hungry herd. A perfect campsite.

Did Chief Ouray, Chief Shavano and the other elders stand together close to the very spot on which I was intruding? They must have been thinking about treaties signed and promises made.

Did they believe as the treaties read, "This is (your) land as long as the grass grows, and the rivers run"?

Or did they somehow know it was quickly going to end in 1881, when the Ute "Trail of Tears" began with the forced march to Duchesne, Utah. With that thought, I turned and backed away from that sacred tree. With respect and dignity to a culture mostly lost to us, I reverently left corn meal in the four directions. I looked skyward and mumbled, "It is ***not*** just an old tree stump."





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FORT LEWIS COLLEGE

2024 Archaeological Field School

at BLM Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

May 13–June 21, 2024

The field school will include six weeks of training in archaeological methods. Students will gain experience in archaeological survey, manual and digital mapping, architectural and site documentation, as well as archaeological collections management and curation. Field trips to local sites will provide additional context for the project.

Cost: Tuition for Colorado residents is $1890.00, and tuition for out-of-state residents is $4674.00. Members of federally recognized Tribes may apply for a tuition waiver. An additional course fee of $1000.00 will be collected from each student to cover transportation and other expenses.

Course Information: ANTH 369: Field Training in Archaeology (6 credits). Open to students who have completed ANTH 201 or an equivalent introduction to archaeology class.

For more information visit our field school website:
http://www.fortlewis.edu/fieldschool

Applications are due March 1, 2024

From the Editor

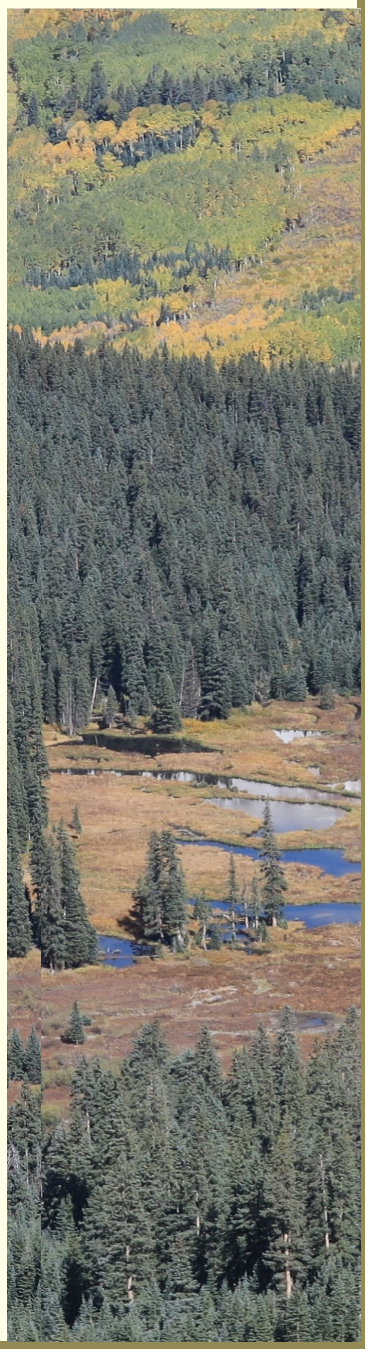
Sometime in the early Holocene on an island on the west coast of present-day Sweden, some teenagers were hanging around chewing the next best thing to gum—birch pitch. Perhaps they were softening up the resin to make it pliable enough for use as glue, or perhaps they were just chewing for pleasure. They may have been engaged in some maintenance activities while conversing and watching the younger children. Or, we might just think they were up to no good: they were teenagers after all. Whatever the reason, they left behind about 90 pieces of chewed resin for archaeologists to find.

There were two studies that I particularly liked this month. The one depicted above came out just last month, and it led me to the second research paper, published in 2019. Both deal with DNA recovered from chewed pitch, and while the earlier paper dealt with the genome of the chewer, the more recent paper is concerned with what the chewer had recently eaten and, more importantly, about that person's oral health.

The 2019 study analyzed one piece of chewed birch resin found at a 5700-year-old site in southern Denmark. The authors explained that pitch was an excellent medium for preservation of DNA, because of its "aseptic and hydrophobic properties [that] inhibit microbial and chemical decay." The research focused on the genome of the chewer, and in passing was able to say something about the diet and oral health of the individual. Sounds like magic, but the authors determined that the chewer was a woman with dark skin, dark hair, and blue eyes—and by the way, she was lactose intolerant. She lived near the end of the European Mesolithic, when Early Neolithic farmers were starting to move into western Europe, but she was ethnically distinct from those newcomers. She had a mouthful of bacteria, most of which were benign residents typical of human mouths, but a few of which may have led later to periodontal disease.

The Swedish study focused on the contents of the mouths of three pitch chewers. They found lots of commensal bacteria, neither harmful nor helpful. In one of the samples, however, there was a strong presence of bacteria associated with periodontal disease, enough to cause considerable pain, such that chewing would have been quite difficult. They also found DNA of what the chewers had been eating (or processing) recently: red deer (we call them elk), wolf, red fox, arctic fox, brown trout, mallard, European robin, European turtle dove, tufted duck, limpet, hazelnut, eelgrass, European crab apple, apple and mistletoe between the three of them. The wolf and fox may have been processed for clothing—or eaten. The mistletoe may have been medicinal.

I started out poking fun at teenagers, but the chewer's age was never the point of these research papers. Neither one mentions the age of any person whose mouth has been sampled. What really seems fascinating to me about these studies is that the information comes, not from the remains of any humans on site, and not from the remains of any animals or plant material that may have been recovered in the hearths. Rather, all this detailed information about the health and the diet of people who lived way back in the past, all of the information about the state of the inside of people's mouths—in the absence of material remains of those mouths—comes from DNA found in small bits of chewed resin. Wow.



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Jensen, Theis Z.T., Niemann, J., Iversen, K.H. *et al.*
2019 A 5700 year-old human genome and oral microbiome from chewed birch pitch. *Nature Communications* **10**:5520 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-019-13549-9

Kırdök, E., Kashuba, N., Damlien, H. *et al.*
2023 Metagenomic analysis of Mesolithic chewed pitch reveals poor oral health among stone age individuals. *Scientific Reports* **13**:22125. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-48762-6.

Stockholm University
2024 Ancient chewing gum reveals stone age diet. News release January 18, 2024.

Chipeta Chapter

Colorado Archaeological Society
P.O. Box 593
Montrose, Colorado 81402

Membership Application

Date: _____

Name: _____

Street or RR Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

(email required to receive Chipeta Chapter newsletters & field trip info)

Photos by Dennis DeVore

Check One:
_____ New
_____ Renewal

Annual Dues* (includes state CAS dues): Check one

_____ Family (2 or more members same household) $40
_____ Individual $35
_____ Student (Circle if Individual or Family) $25
_____ Secondary (Circle one) Individual ($10) or Family… ($15)
_____ Opt out of printed ***Southwest Lore***

****Southwest Lore*** is the journal of the Colorado Archaeological Society: a .pdf is posted to Member365 for download. Effective soon, if you want a print copy, you will have to go to the state CAS website and pay an additional fee.

Code of Ethics

As a member of the Colorado Archaeological Society, I pledge to:

- Uphold local, state, and federal antiquities laws.
- Respect the property rights of landowners.
- Report vandalism to appropriate authorities.
- Support only scientifically and legally conducted archaeological activities.
- Conduct field and/or laboratory activities using professionally accepted standards.
- Not condone the sale, exchange, or purchase of artifacts obtained from illegal activities.
- Be sensitive to the cultural histories and spiritual practices of groups that are the subject of archaeological investigation.
- Accept the responsibility, if serving as principal investigator, to publish the results and make the collection available for further study.

Signature: _____ Other Family Signature: _____

Make checks payable to "Colorado Archaeological Society" and mail the signed application to:

Chipeta Chapter
P.O. Box 593, Montrose, CO 81402

CHIPETA CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS

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- **Site Steward Coordinator:** Leigh Ann Hunt, sitestewards@chipetachaptercas.org
- **Library:** Linda Manske, library@chipetachaptercas.org

CHIPETA CHAPTER WEBSITE

- https://www.chipetachaptercas.org

TO JOIN OR RENEW:

- Go to the Chipeta Chapter website and follow the membership links.

Program for Avocational Archaeological Certification (PAAC)

For information, visit:

https://www.historycolorado/paac

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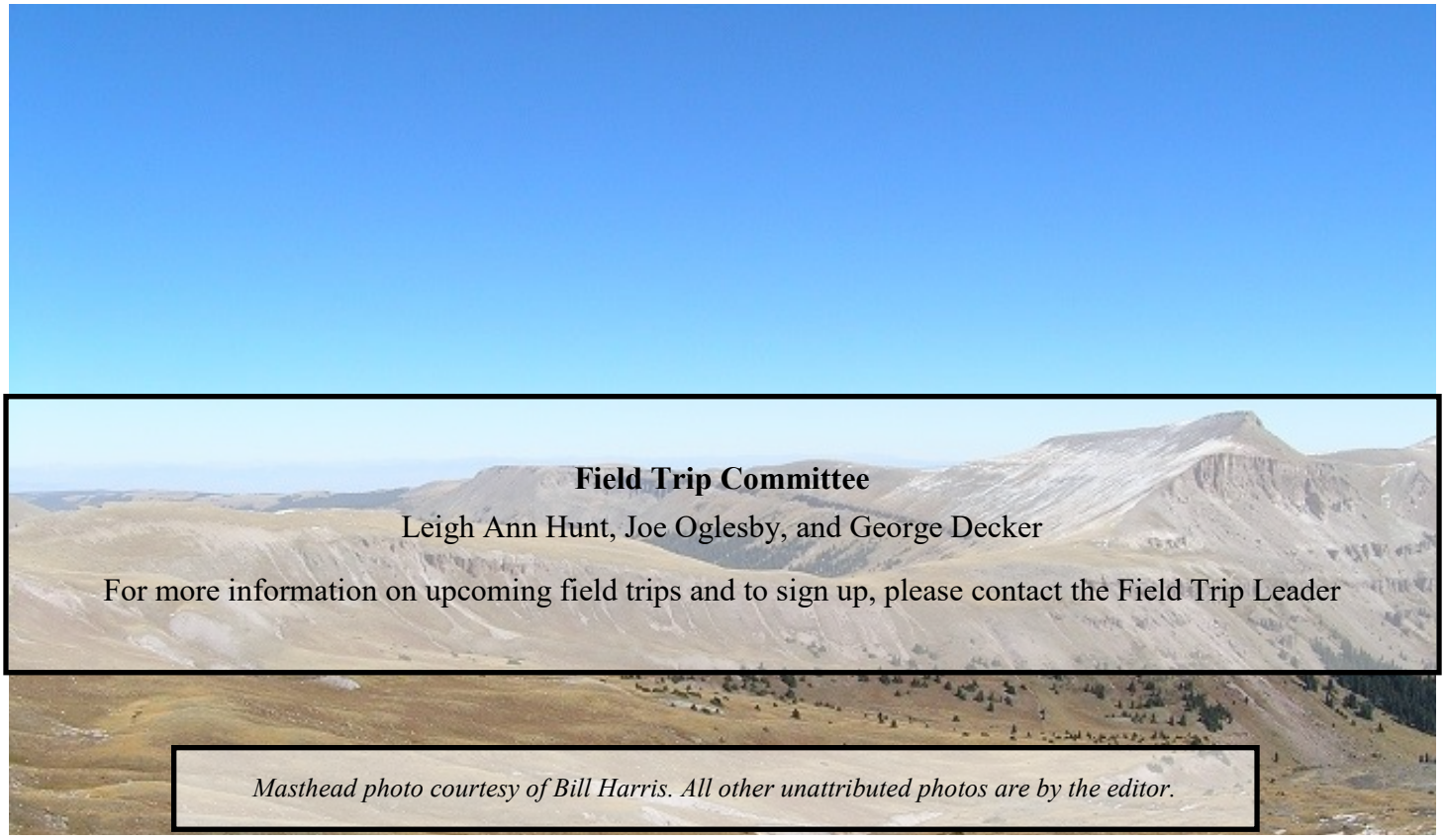

Field Trip Committee

Leigh Ann Hunt, Joe Oglesby, and George Decker

For more information on upcoming field trips and to sign up, please contact the Field Trip Leader

Masthead photo courtesy of Bill Harris. All other unattributed photos are by the editor.