

The Uncompahgre Journal

January 2026 CHIPETA CHAPTER OF THE COLORADO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY Volume 43 Issue 1

Our January Presentation

Mark Your Calendar

Jan 14: [San Juan Basin Archaeological Society](#) monthly meeting with Mario Borrero on the ancient Maya from a frontier perspective. Lyceum, Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College, 7:00 pm.

Jan 21: [Chipeta Chapter](#) monthly meeting with Zebulon Miracle on Colorado Highway 141. United Methodist Church, 19 S. Park Ave, Montrose, 7:00 pm.

Jan 28: [CAS-GJ](#) monthly meeting with Dennis DeVore on canids in rock art. Redlands United Methodist Church, 527 Village Way, GJ, 6:30 pm.

Highway 141

by Zebulon Miracle

A geologic puzzle that forms a canyon with two mouths. The horse trainer turned thief turned national celebrity. The mysterious murder in a post office driven by jealousy and a kidney shaped canyon named after a mythical sailor. Add on the splitting of the atom, footprints from over a hundred million years ago, and one of Colorado's most unique mining structures and you get a drive down Highway 141 from Whitewater to Naturita. Join Zebulon Miracle as we take a voyage into geology, archaeology, history, and a touch of legend.



Our January Speaker

Zebulon Miracle is the CEO of Roice-Hurst Humane Society in Grand Junction, Colorado. A western Colorado native, Zeb has a passion for building stronger communities through nonprofit work as well as connecting people to the places and cultural and scientific resources that surround them. Zebulon was the Curator of Anthropology and Collections Manager for the Museum of Western Colorado and Director and Curator of the Gateway Auto Museum and is currently on the board of History Colorado. In the past he has served on the City of Grand Junction Historic Preservation Board, the Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board, and the board of Colorado Canyons Association. Zeb launched new initiatives and strategies for United Way of Mesa County as their Executive Director and currently helps promote the bonds between pets and their people at Roice-Hurst. When not following his passions at work, he can be found hiking with his trusty golden retriever Zephyrus or visiting national parks and historic sites with his wife and son.



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P.O. Box 593

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Submissions for publication

may be emailed to:

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President's Corner

by Janet Fabula

Not too long back I was asked "wouldn't you like to be the new president of our Chipeta Chapter?" Out of politeness I replied "let me think about that...." Now, here I am, your new Chipeta Chapter president. It just goes to show, you just never know.

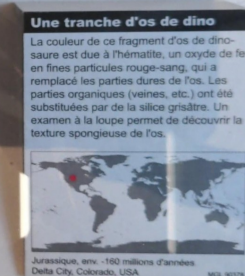
How did I end up here? Quite simply, a year and a half ago I was online looking for some new horseback trails to enjoy and I came across a trail ride that mentioned the Harris Archaeological site. From there I eventually ended up at the Chipeta Chapter website, and then to a monthly meeting, and shortly thereafter, I joined your society.

Rudyard Kipling is a favorite author of mine, so I will borrow a phrase of his

and address it to you: "for my friends known and unknown, something of myself."

I used to live in the Santa Cruz mountains of California. In 1993 we moved to Delta, Colorado. It was the best move we ever made. As time passed, as it is wont to do, my 3 sons grew up into fine young men and my husband passed away to the heavenly kingdom. Over these past happy years I've raised milk goats (my favorite), cooked at hunting camps, cooked for the local jail, worked in the sheriff department dispatch and lastly, I was the secretary for Foster Farms feed mill in Delta.

While visiting the archaeology wing of the Palais de Rumine in Lausanne Switzerland this month, I discovered an exhibit labeled "Slice of Dinosaur Bone from Delta City Colorado". That brought home for me the title of a book by Travis Elborough: "An Atlas of Unexpected Places." Archaeology is just such an atlas of unexpected places for me.



A Message from our Membership Chair

Dear members,

Everybody has heard by now about the increase in membership dues at the state level. At this point, the board felt that we would not raise our part of the dues, and we would cover the small amount that was raised by the state: in other words, the dues will stay the same as they were last year. We will review this decision again next year. I hope this answers everybody's questions; if you need more information, feel free to email me.

Sally

Chipeta Chapter Christmas Party

Good food ...



... and Fellowship



Thanks to Leigh Ann Hunt for the photos

Alpine Archaeology Photo Contest 3rd Quarter 2025

The winner of Alpine Archaeology's 2025 3rd Quarter staff photo contest was the firm's Human Resource Manager, Kiefer Thomas. Kiefer's photo was taken from inside a kiva at Pecos National Historical Park at Pecos, New Mexico. It is looking at the ladder from behind.



Staff Archaeologist Charlie Seevers was the runner-up in the 3rd Quarter Contest. His photograph was taken at Tabeguache II Rock Shelter in the West End of Montrose County, northwest of Nucla. The site is known to contain Archaic, Basketmaker II, and Late Prehistoric cultural material.

Thanks to Jacki Mullen for the descriptions

From the Editor

People do funny things. Or at least they seem funny if we're not intimately familiar with their culture. Sometimes the things they leave behind are so funny or majestic that we can't conceive of why they were made, or in some cases how they were made; we tend to severely underestimate early civilizations. When remnants of past cultures seem particularly unusual, some people want to make up really weird origins for them—like spacemen, a vanished race of giants, or other alien beings. Apparently, it's gotten so bad that some archaeologists feel the need to publish studies simply to prevent fringe elements from co-opting unexplained archaeological remains as evidence for supernatural or extraterrestrial goings-on.

This is a story about holes: just simple holes in the ground, a couple of meters across and up to a meter deep. These are found in Peru, in a coastal area where a sophisticated society called Chinchu thrived a hundred years or so before they were conquered by the Inca, who lived just to the north. The remarkable thing about these holes—and the thing that may attract the attention of people with overactive imaginations—is that there are around 5200 of them. They are organized in neat rows with maybe eight holes per row, averaging 19 meters wide and stretching for a kilometer and a half over the dry hills above a fertile valley and coastal plain. They also seem to be grouped in a way, with spaces between the groups of holes.

There are three things about this article that interest me. The first is the simple fact that it seems to be a rather bizarre artifact of a civilization: a bunch of holes in a regular pattern cutting a narrow swath over a ridge of dry sediment above a fertile plain. The second is the explanation proposed by the authors: the row of holes might in fact be a market place, and it seems to somehow mirror the characteristics of a *khipu*, the famous Inca accounting system consisting of knotted strings. Third is that the authors chose to justify their study because they wanted to explain the holes sufficiently so that the world would not choose to substitute a mystical or extraterrestrial explanation for a rational one (as if the world has ever favored the rational over the irrational). I don't recall any other case where a study was justified on the grounds that we need to explain this quickly before the wackos get wind of it.

At any rate, the authors sampled a small subset of

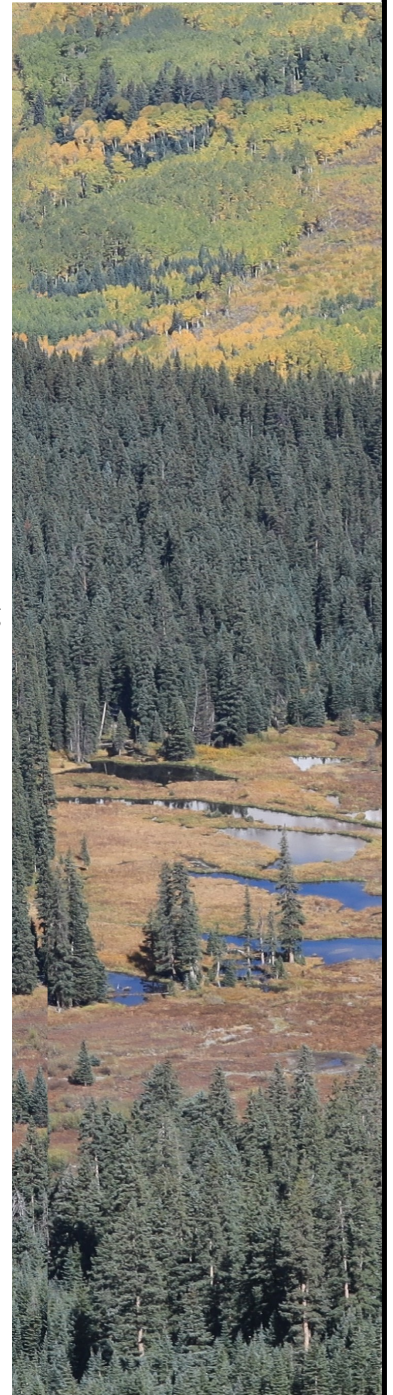
these holes to see what clues they could find as to their function. They collected sediment from the bottom of 19 of them, and got one radiocarbon date of AD 1320–1405, just prior to the Inca takeover. Ceramic evidence indicates that the holes were used at least until the arrival of the Spanish around 1530. Analysis of the sediment samples yielded evidence of corn, squash, and amaranth among other things.

The authors conclude that the swath of holes functioned as a marketplace, and also suggest that it may have had something to do with taxation and trade. The remains indicate that the holes may have been lined with plant material. Alternatively, baskets of willow boughs, bulrushes, or reeds containing food or goods may have been placed in the holes. Each grouping of holes might have been controlled by “kin-based units.” I can't really imagine how such a system would have worked, but that's probably a result of my ignorance of the organization of market systems in this part of the world.

The authors note that marketplaces are frequently placed along long-distance trade routes and at boundaries between ecozones. The band of holes, situated at the interior edge of the fertile coastal plain, were perhaps visited by people from the highlands, bringing highland produce in exchange for maize and other products of the lowlands. There is as yet no evidence for non-local foods, so there is still some work to be done.

References

- Bongers JL, Kiahtipes CA, Beresford-Jones D, et al. 2025 Indigenous accounting and exchange at Monte Sierpe ('Band of Holes') in the Pisco Valley, Peru. *Antiquity*. Published online 2025:1-19. doi:10.15184/aqy.2025.10237



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)

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.

Photos by Dennis DeVore



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

- **President:** Janet Fabula, president@chipetachaptercas.org
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- **Treasurer:** Jim Douras, treasurer@chipetachaptercas.org
- **CAS Rep:** Nick Ard, casrep@chipetachaptercas.org

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- **Membership:** Sally Johnson, membership@chipetachaptercas.org
- **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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Leigh Ann Hunt

Chipeta Chapter PAAC Coordinator

vp@chipetachaptercas.org

Winter Speakers

February: Jon Horn: Old Spanish Trail

March: April Brown: Director of the Archaeology Conservancy

April: Bruce Bradley: Lithics Guru

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.