



Loveland Archaeological Society, Inc.

A Colorado Non-Profit Corporation

LAS November 2016 Headlines:

(Note: this story is a little dated, but Hallie Meeker from Colorado State University, mentioned in the story, is the recipient of the 2015 Dorothy Mountain Memorial Scholarship. Enjoy!)

Moriah Ranch tells 10,000 year-old story

by Kelsey Dayton, WyoFile, August 13, 2013



The Moriah Ranch is a rich archaeological find because it hasn't been picked over by artifact collectors. This is one of the many artifacts found this summer at the ranch. (Photo courtesy Rich Adams)

Hallie Meeker knew she was seeing something special the moment she first saw the huge granite outcroppings and the expansive grasslands watered by natural springs on the Moriah Ranch.

"It just spoke to me," she said. She knew it was a place people could have lived. She knew there was a story. She just didn't know how much of one she'd find.



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Meeker was a student at Colorado State University in 2012 when she first arrived at the ranch near Laramie with Richard Adams, adjunct faculty at Colorado State University and the University of Wyoming to look at a recorded archaeological site.

Adams read an announcement that Wyoming recently acquired the nearly 13,000-acre ranch.

Adams knew there was at least one standing wickiup, a domed dwelling used by some early American Indians on the property.

That was just the beginning.

In August Meeker and Adams returned with other archeologists and students to see what they could find exploring 22 acres.

“In 10 days we found 10,000 years of archaeology,” Meeker said.

They found spear points from big game hunters 10,000 years ago, rare metal arrowheads from the 19th century and items from every time period in between.

From Aug. 5 through 14 teams scoured the area and documented 70 different sites. Each site must have at least 15 artifacts, Adams said. A final count on what was found hasn't yet been compiled, but the archaeologist know what they have found is unusual.

“There's 10,000 years of occupation there,” Adams said. And even more importantly the sites are nearly pristine, not yet picked over by artifact hunters the way most sites are now often discovered.

The pristine condition of the site provides a sample of what archaeology was like in the area, before development and collectors.

Artifact collecting is an ongoing problem in Wyoming, Adams said. Most people don't realize there is any harm in taking something they find.

One family donated 50 gallons of projectile points a relative collected before she died. That was 50 gallons of artifacts no one would ever learn the story behind, Adams said.

If someone brings him an item, like an arrowhead, Adams can likely determine the age by the size and shape. But if Adams can see the arrowhead where it was left, in what type of

landscape and what other artifacts were near it, he can begin to discern a larger story. How many people were in the area, was it home, or a stop on a journey? Why were they there and how long did they stay? When and why did they leave?

“If you yank an arrowhead out of its context, it's just a pretty rock,” he said.

There are laws, depending on where you are, against artifact collecting, but most people don't realize taking items is wrong, Adams said. Adams has caught a mayor of a small town looting a site and even seen a Sheriff collecting artifacts. Most aren't taking things to make money.

“It takes a great act of will power to walk away from a complete obsidian arrowhead glistening in the sun,” Adams said. “They are just so cool to behold.”



Artifacts tell a story about the people who lived in the area. The Moriah Ranch is rich in discovery because it is home to artifacts spanning 10,000 years.

(Photo courtesy Rich Adams)



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Collecting artifacts isn't a problem unique to Wyoming, said John Laughlin, an archaeologist with the State Preservation Society who also was a crew leader at the Moriah Ranch in August. As soon as fields are tilled in the spring out East people are looking for artifacts. Most people pick up items because they find them interesting, but new television shows dedicated to following collectors is likely making more people want to collect and sell items they find.

The Moriah Ranch in its mostly undisturbed state has potential to answer more research questions than other sites, Laughlin said. It provided a perfect classroom for students this summer who learned how to properly record sites and identify items found. The variety of time periods represented gave students a chance to learn the small differences in artifacts from different eras.

Hopefully the ranch will be used for more study in the future, Adams said. The August work was meant to assess the potential of the land for archaeology, Adams said. The work the teams started this summer just scratched the surface. The discoveries on the ranch have only just begun.

Adams would like to see a field school at the ranch and hopes graduate students will tackle research projects at the site.

Meeker, now a master's student at Colorado State University, would be one of the first to sign up.

"I hope to get back there every time I can," she said.

For Meeker, the draw of archaeology is time travel.

Holding an arrowhead she can study its size and flaking to figure its age. At the Moriah Ranch she then can look around the landscape and think about why it was where it was found and the people who left it and slowly a story unfolds.

12,300-YEAR-OLD FIRE PIT FOUND IN NORTHERN UTAH

By The Associated Press Aug 6, 2016

HILL AIR FORCE BASE, Utah — An ancient tribal fire pit with tools, a spear tip and tobacco seeds that archaeologists say dates back 12,300 years was recently discovered on a military testing range in northern Utah.

An archaeological team this month uncovered the hearth at Hill Air Force Base's Utah Test and Training Range, which is south of Ogden. The artifacts will be curated through the Natural History Museum of Utah in Salt Lake City, The Standard Examiner reported (<http://bit.ly/2ayONDx>).

Hill archaeologist and Cultural Resource Manager Anya Kitterman worked with Far Western Anthropological Research Group to uncover charcoal, animal bone fragments and other remnants from the cooking pit.

"When you come across a find like that, it's obviously very exciting," Kitterman said. "You're getting a real picture of the history of this land. It's an unbelievable feeling. We've been looking for something major like this for years."

Far Western Senior Archaeologist Daron Duke said the age of the hearth and the items within it are remnants from some of the Great Basin's earliest inhabitants. "They really are the first occupants of the Great Basin that we can demonstrate," Duke said.

The Great Basin is a huge region of watersheds that encompasses much of Nevada and parts of Utah, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming and California.

The dig site was discovered about a year ago after previous surveys and calculations suggested the area had potential for significant archaeological resources, Kitterman said. Teams are actively surveying between 4 and 8 square miles of the training range each year, she said.

Trying to find artifacts can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack, Ketterman said.



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Barbara Fisher, chief of Hill's Environmental Public Affairs office, said the base consults with 21 Native American tribes about findings and archaeological work performed at the range.

Patty Timbimboo-Madsen, cultural and natural resources manager for the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation, said tribes care about findings and are glad work is being done to preserve such history.

"It's another piece of evidence that says we did exist, we did live here, and we had an impact," she said. "It's a testament to our people and the role we had. That's important."

LAS Find of the Month, November 2016:

Members can bring an artifact to be entered into the competition at the monthly meeting, which will be judged based on the following rules:

1. Must be a member of LAS in good standing.
2. The artifact must be a personal find.
3. It must have been found within the specified time frame, i.e., within the month prior to the meeting.
4. The artifact doesn't have to be a Colorado find—all that matters is that it was found in the last month.

The Find of the Month for November 2016 was made by Steve Campbell.

Type: Black on White Ceramic Bowl
Material: Ceramic
Location: Private Land in New Mexico



LAS News and Upcoming Events:

Speakers Needed!

Really!! We need speakers for our 2017 meetings! If you would like to give a presentation or know of someone who would give a great program please contact Andy Coca, Jean Steinhoff or Kevin Zeeck. No experience is necessary, just a passion for our hobby and a willingness to share that passion. Thanks!

December 6, 2016 December meeting - annual Christmas party. Bring a dish to share for the annual feast, and a few of your favorite artifacts for Show and Tell. Also, we will be taking donations in the form of gifts, gift cards, or money to provide a Christmas for Native American families in the area. If you can't attend and would like to make a donation please contact Sharon Lundt at (970) 669-2375. Annual LAS officer elections will be held at the beginning of the December meeting.

January 3, 2017 January meeting. Program: Plan your presentation and give me a call today!

- Sponsor of the Annual Loveland Stone Age Fair -
www.stoneagefair.com