

Dixie Archeology Society April Speaker

Amy Ramsland is the Curator and Archaeologist at Fremont Indian State Park in Sevier, Utah. Originally from a suburb of Chicago, Illinois, she has loved history and archaeology since childhood which led her to study archaeology at Wheaton College where she excavated for several seasons in Ashkelon, Israel. In college her love of archaeology transformed into a desire to share archaeology and history with others through public interpretation and exhibit design in museums. She has worked in several museums in Illinois and completed her Masters Degree in Historical Administration before moving to Utah to work in Utah State Parks. She has delved into exploring the historical landscape here and studying the fascinating cultures that lived throughout the Southwestern United States.

Her presentation was about Fremont Indian State Park, specifically looking at the excavations of Five Finger Ridge, the rock art, which fills this canyon, and what we have learned about the Fremont people through them.

The Fremont Indians main habitat was throughout Utah. They lived here from 200 AD to 1350 AD with the height of activity being from 1100-1350 AD. There is evidence of them using the bow and arrow from 200 AD and pottery remnants from 500 AD. Pit houses date back to 700 AD.

They are named after the explorer, John C. Fremont. They were hunter/gatherers but also did some farming. Archeologists discovered stone balls and gaming pieces that were probably used in games. Their geometric rock art is also mimicked in their pottery.

Fremont State Park is located between Pahvant and the Tushar Range. I-15 goes right past Five Finger Ridge. A child on a field trip alerted his father about mining that started at the Ridge, and they were able to stop the mining.

Archeologists found 100 structures, nineteen granaries, and thirty-seven pit-houses on the Ridge. They discovered ninety-four archeology sites at Clear Creek Canyon, forty-three rock art sites, and two granaries; these are the largest groups of structures found to date.

The structures are interesting. Pit-houses were built by digging down about three feet, then built up above ground with wood and dirt. The Coyote Granary had evidence of charred corn, cactus, juniper, and pinyon oak. The Falling Man Granary had remnants of corn, pine nuts, juniper, seeds, and bark.

While there was no evidence of fields or irrigation, there were over fifty wild plants including pigweed and shade scale. The Fremont Indians must have hunted deer,

mountain sheep, bison cottontail, and jackrabbits. Birds such as grouse, flickers, jays and raptors were abundant.

What happened in 1350? The answer might be that the Fremont may have migrated southward where the Hopi lived. For now, it remains a mystery. However, archaeo-astronomers are studying the petroglyphs in Clear Creek Canyon, comparing them with each other. One panel is lit up by the Winter Solstice. It has thirty-seven dots with a man walking toward the Solstice. The other panel is a Summer Solstice panel and shows two men walking toward each other on thirty-seven dots.

On a sad note, excavators destroyed the Spider Woman panel, upsetting the Paiutes. The Paiutes cursed UDOT (Utah Department of Transportation), and while some people don't believe in curses, there was a flood.