

6.1 Atkeson Pueblo (Oak Creek) Overview

This chapter is based on two reports prepared by our Director of Archaeology, Dr. Todd Bostwick for the stabilization project at Atkeson and an APS project at Ottens.

The Atkeson Pueblo on Oak Creek is situated on a bluff located 15 miles (24 km) northwest of Camp Verde at an elevation of 3,300 ft (1,006 m) near the confluence of Oak Creek and the Verde River in Township 15 N, Range 4 East, NW ¼ of SW ¼ of Section 21 (Figure 1). Oak Creek and the Verde River would have served as year-round sources of water, and agricultural fields would have been located in the immediate vicinity. The elevated location of the pueblo would have provided an excellent view of people travelling up and down Oak Creek. Atkeson Pueblo is one of a number of prehistoric sites located in regularly-spaced intervals of around 2 miles (3.2 km) along the upper and middle Verde River and its tributaries (Pilles 1996) (Figure 2). Nearby sites include the Sugarloaf Ruin, located upstream on Oak Creek, and the Bridgeport Ruin, located upstream on the nearby Verde River.



Figure 1. Atkeson Pueblo and its environmental setting, white arrow points to the site. The trees are located along Oak Creek. The view is to the southeast.



Figure 2. Map of the Verde Valley showing major prehistoric sites (Powers and Pearson 2008:Figure 1.1). Atkeson Pueblo is Site No. 9 (arrow) and identified as Oak Creek Ruin.

PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS OF ATKESON PUEBLO ON OAK CREEK

The first known detailed examination of the Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek was by Dr. Edgar A. Mearns, a U.S. Army surgeon who was stationed at Fort Verde from 1884 to 1888 (Ayers 2010: 104; James and Pilles 2012). Dr. Mearns was also a skilled naturalist who developed an interest in archaeology while at Fort Verde, excavating a number of sites and taking photographs of them, including the Oak Creek Ruin. He later published the results of his excavations in an issue of *Popular Science Monthly* (Mearns 1890). Mearns' collections are now located at the American Museum of Natural History, the U.S. National Museum and the Army Medical Museum (James and Pilles 2012).

One of Mearns' photographs, taken on February 11, 1887, shows rooms carved out of the limestone cliff that is located below and south of the pueblo. John Wesley Powell (1886) called these kinds of carved rooms "cavates." An opening is present in the southern wall of the pueblo,

which may have been a window or a doorway (Figure 3). Another standing wall is visible in this photograph to the east of the wall with the opening. A second photograph by Mearns shows the standing pueblo walls as they existed in the late 1880s.



Figure 3. 1887 Photograph of Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin from the south side of Oak Creek by Edgar Mearns, looking north (courtesy of the Library of Congress).

The Sedona Heritage Museum has a photograph of the Atkeson/Oak Creek Ruin taken by Prescott photographer Erwin Baer in the 1890s (Cowan 2011:11). Another individual to photograph the site was C.R. Allen, another photographer with a studio in Prescott. One of Allen's photographs, dated September 23, 1893, shows the Atkeson Pueblo from the south, across Oak Creek. In another of Allen's photographs, standing walls of the pueblo are visible, which he called "Aztec Ruin." His assistant, George Gommel, is standing next to one of the walls of the masonry pueblo (Figure 5). A third photograph shows a close-up of the walls with several individual sitting on the walls (Figure 6).



Figure 4. Mearns' 1887 photograph of pueblo rooms on top of mesa at Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin, looking southeast (courtesy of the Library of Congress).



Figure 5. Allen's 1893 photograph of Atkeson Pueblo /Oak Creek Ruin (courtesy of Arizona Historical Society).



Figure 6. Allen's close-up photograph of Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin (Courtesy of Arizona Historical Society).

JESSE WALTER FEWKES

In 1895, the U.S. National Museum of the Smithsonian Institution sent Jesse Walter Fewkes to collect artifacts for the museum from the Southwest region. Fewkes was interested in the “ancestral abodes” of certain Hopi clans and he thought that the Verde Valley was an ideal location to conduct his collections. Fewkes (1898:536) classified those ancestral abodes into three types: (1) pueblos, (2) cliff houses, and (3) cavate dwellings. The latter were found in a number of locations along the Verde River and Oak Creek. One of those locations was at the Atkeson Pueblo, which Fewkes called the Oak Creek Ruin. Fewkes' (1898: Plate XCI) report included a photograph of the Atkeson Pueblo from the south, across from Oak Creek. This photograph is very similar to those taken by Mearns and Allen (Figure 7). The opening in the pueblo wall visible in Mearns' photograph also appears in Fewkes' photograph.

Soon after Fewkes' 1898 report was issued, W.P. Blake (1900) published an article on prehistoric turquoise mosaics artifacts. In this article, Blake identified a turquoise mosaic in the shape of a bird that was recovered from the Oak Creek Ruin. This artifact was perforated and may have had a backing of lac (Fowler and Wilcox 2003:190). According to Wilcox (2003:98), turquoise mosaic birds, as well as toads, are “rare but recurrent finds in burial or other ritual contexts in Arizona and Chihuahua.” He suggests these unique artifacts may have represented a raptorial sky creature that was used as a symbol of political office (Wilcox 2003:98). Similar turquoise mosaic artifacts in the shape of a bird have been found at other sites in the Verde Valley including Bridgeport (Simmons n.d.) and Montezuma Castle (Jackson and Van Valenburg 1954), as well as in the Northern Sinagua Magician's burial near Flagstaff (McGregor 1943). A total of 13 turquoise encrusted bird-shaped artifacts have been found in Arizona (Billideau and Wilcox 1983; Fowler and Wilcox 2003:189-193).



Figure 7. Fewkes' (1898:Plate XCI) photograph of Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin showing cavates and two standing walls of the pueblo located on top of the mesa, looking north.

In 1906, Fewkes returned to central Arizona and recorded the Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin in more detail as part of his field work in the upper Verde Valley and Walnut Creek Canyon Valley. This work was considered preliminary and its intent was to document the types of prehistoric architecture of the region and to supplement the work done by Cosmos Mindeleff (1896) in the middle Verde Valley south of Camp Verde. Mindeleff also conducted his field work for the U.S. National Museum and had recorded an extensive system of cavates along the Verde River, south of Camp Verde.

Fewkes' report on his 1906 field work was published six years later in the 28th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Fewkes 1912). Fewkes (1912:185) considered the Verde Valley "the western frontier of the ancient Pueblo country," where agricultural people "were subject to attack by powerful nomadic tribes," resulting in numerous defensive structures being built on hilltops. He also suggested that the Yavapai, Walapai (Hualapai), and the Havasupai "may be regarded as descendants of the prehistoric house builders" (Fewkes 1912:185).

In his 1906 report, Fewkes described both the masonry rooms located on the hilltop (Figure 8) as well as the cavates located in a limestone cliff below, to the south and east of the masonry rooms (Figure 9). Fewkes (1912:188) believed that the cavates and the masonry pueblo were occupied at the same time and may have had different functions (ie., living quarters versus ceremonial rooms). He noted that most of the walls of the pueblo had fallen, but that a few of the rooms were "fairly well preserved" (Fewkes 1912:189). The pueblo itself was measured by Fewkes (1912:189) as 231 ft (70.4 m) east to west and 135 ft (41.2 m) north to south. About 24 rooms were recorded. He noted that the rooms were relatively large and the walls were made of "undressed reddish brown stones, bearing evidences that they were formerly plastered" (Fewkes 1912:189). The highest walls

still standing in 1906 were about 20 ft (6.1 m) tall, with several other walls up to 15 ft (4.6 m) in height. He estimated that the pueblo originally was three-stories tall because of “the positions of projecting floor beams and of apertures which formerly received such beams” (Fewkes 1912:189).

In addition to the masonry pueblo, Fewkes (1912:190) also recorded a circular depression northwest and below the pueblo, which he suggested may have been a water reservoir since there were no known circular kivas in the Verde Valley (none has been found since then). A map of the site was drawn by Fewkes (1912:Figure 55), which shows the depression to be about 67 ft (20.4 m) in diameter (Figure 10). Most of Fewkes’ (1912:190-193) report focused on describing the cavates, with 13 rooms identified on the south cliff face (Fewkes 1912:Figure 56) and an additional 3 cavate rooms on the east cliff face (Fewkes 1912:Figure 57). Masonry walls were recorded inside one of the southern cavate rooms and inside one of the eastern cavate rooms. He also identified a “peep hole” in the western-most cavate on the eastern side of the cliff face. Other cavates contained carved out niches, mortars in the floors, and connecting passageways. Some of the cavates had smoke-blackened ceilings. Fewkes (1912:190) also noted that the average depth of the cavates was around 20 ft (6.1 m). No structures were found in front of the cavates.



Figure 8. Fewkes’ (1912:Plate 81a) photograph of Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin, looking southeast.



Figure 9. Fewkes' (1912:Plate 81b) photograph of cavates below Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin, looking north. Compare this photograph with Figure 3. The vegetation present below the cavates in this photograph was not present in Fewkes' 1898 photograph.

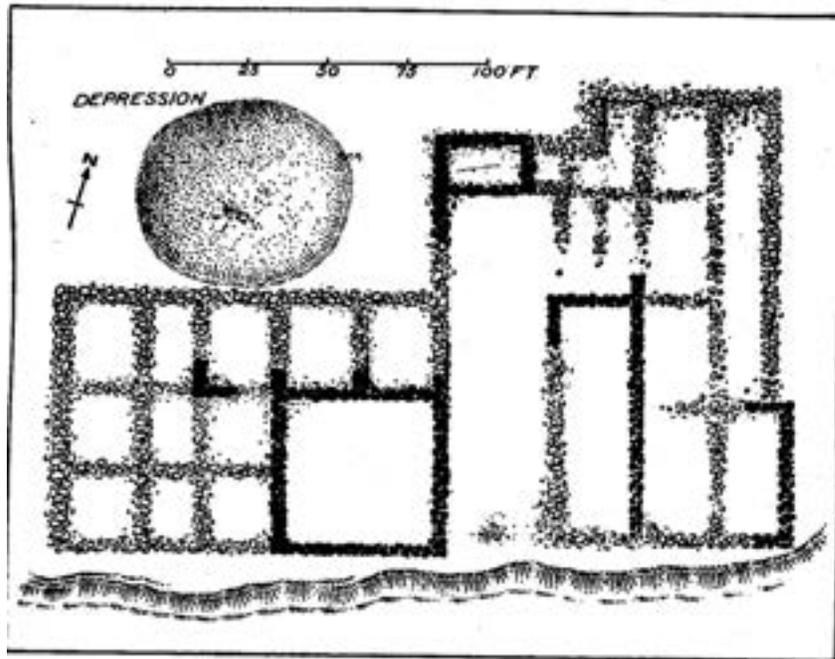


Figure 10. Fewkes' (1912:Figure 55) sketch map of Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin.

GILA PUEBLO

In the mid-1920s, a retired New York stockbroker, Harold S. Colton, became interested in sponsoring research in Southwest archaeology. He founded the Gila Pueblo Archaeological Foundation in 1928 with his wife, Winifred. From their headquarters in Globe, they send out numerous graduate students and researchers for nearly two decades to conduct surveys and

excavations throughout Arizona. One of their main goals was to determine the boundaries of different pre-contact cultures in Arizona and Mexico. The Verde Valley was targeted as a study area in 1928 and a report was published two years later.

Gila Pueblo hired Frank Mitvalsky (aka Midvale), a prolific mapper of ruins in the Salt and Gila River region, to collect sherds from multiple sites in the Verde Valley. The Verde Valley survey was the fourth part of Harold Gladwin's regional study of ceramic types in Arizona. The Verde Valley study was undertaken to "define the boundaries of the people who originally colonized the Gila Basin, to seek their point of origin, and if possible, to retrace the route by which they entered the Southwest" (Gladwin and Gladwin 1930:163). At the time of the Gila Pueblo survey, there was disagreement if ruins in central Arizona should be seen as related to Pueblo culture, or were affiliated with another group who came from the south or southeast and settled along the southern side of the Mogollon Rim country (Gladwin and Gladwin (1930:163). The Verde Valley survey was from Phoenix to the confluence of Sycamore Creek and the Verde River, and from Prescott to the Mogollon Rim (Gladwin and Gladwin 1930:165).

On October 8, 1928, Mitvalsky collected a number of sherds from the Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin (Verde 5:34 and 35 GP). The Gila Pueblo site card states that the site contained a pueblo with approximately 30 rooms, possibly 3-stories in height, and a series of 33 cavates located along the cliff face to the south for a distance of about 300 ft (91.5 m). Three of the cavates were walled. Bat guano, trash, and ashes were observed inside the cavates at a depth of up to 3 ft (0.9 m). The pueblo was measured as 200 ft (61 m) east-west and 100 ft (30.5 m) north-south. A Gila Pueblo photograph shows a person digging a hole inside the southwest corner of the main room of Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin (Figure 11). The opening in the south wall is visible in this photograph as well.



Figure 11. Gila Pueblo 1928 photograph of Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin Individual in corner of room is standing in a pot hunted hole (courtesy of Arizona State Museum).

Based on their sherd collection survey in central Arizona, the Gladwins argued that “The Verde Valley can be said to mark the western frontier of the Pueblo people” (Gladwin and Gladwin 1930:192). They noted that the Verde Valley region had water and contained excellent farm land and hunting areas. Because it was the first perennial water-course south of the Colorado River, it likely received Pueblo people during their exodus south after the Great Drought of 1275-1299 (Gladwin and Gladwin 1930:193).

The Gladwins’ sherd study did not provide clear-cut answers to their questions about the origins of the Red-on-buff culture, or whether or not the ruins of the Verde Valley were Puebloan. Decorated red-on-buff sherds were scarce, dated earlier in the ceramic sequence, and were typically found on sites interpreted as outposts, not villages. This demonstrated a presence of the red-on-buff (Hohokam) culture in the Verde Valley, but only as one of several cultural influences, and primarily during the Colonial period. Early Pueblo I was present, but scarce. Later, Gila Redware was common and was identified with the Salado people. A fourth ceramic type was classified as Verde [Prescott] Black-on-grey. ” Gladwin and Gladwin (1930:196) concluded, “there was such a churning of people that it will probably never be possible to identify all elements...” They surmised that the Verde Valley was a frontier where” droughts, raids, inter-tribal fighting, and natural restlessness” shaped the history of its various inhabitants (Gladwin and Gladwin 1930:194).



Figure 12. Gila Pueblo 1928 Photograph of Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin; facing northwest (courtesy of Arizona State Museum).

MUSEUM OF NORTHERN ARIZONA

The Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA) staff members also collected sherds from the Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin (NA 1500) as part of Harold Colton's ceramic research program for northern Arizona. The MNA site card is dated July 24, 1930, and it notes that Dick Peila had visited the site in 1912. Harold Colton (Coconino National Forest Office archaeology files) identified the MNA ceramics from Oak Creek Ruin as:

- Tonto Red (N=77)
- Tuzigoot Red (N=59)
- unfired plain (N=1)
- Tusayan Corrugated (N=1)
- Moenkopi Corrugated (N=1)
- Jeddito Black-on-yellow (N=1)
- Winslow Polychrome (N=1)

Caywood and Spicer (1935:9) also reported the presence of Jeddito Black-on-yellow from the Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek ruin.

MAURICE THEDE PURCHASE



Figure x1. Aerial Photograph of Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin ca. 1950s (Courtesy of Margaret Thede).



Figure x2. Thede family in the Grand Canyon in 1964; Margaret (left front), Jennie (right front), and Maurice (courtesy of Margaret Thede).

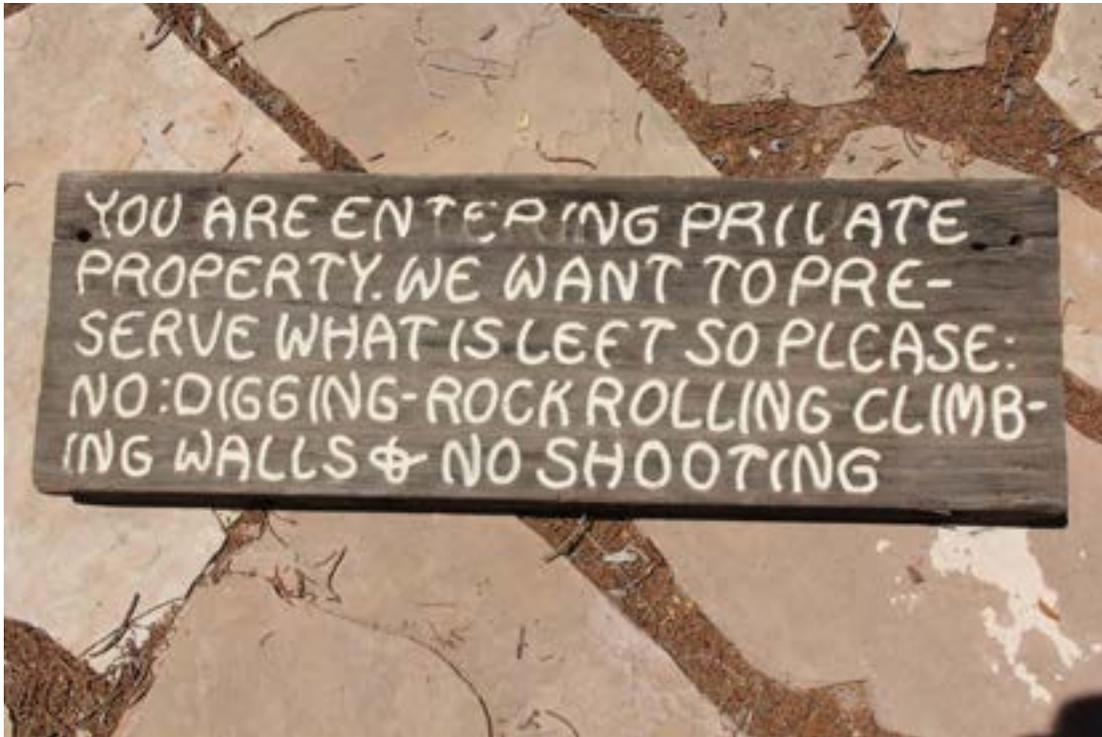


Figure x3. Sign made by Maury Thede at Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin.



Figure x4. Plainware bowl found by Maury Thede at base of cliff below Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin. Scale is 10 cm.

ARIZONA STATE MUSEUM

On November 8, 1971, Helga Teiwes and Sharon Urban of the Arizona State Museum (ASM) at the University of Arizona recorded an ASM site card for the Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin. They noted that Mr. Thede had posted a sign which read, "Leave everything as found."

Approximately 20 rooms were observed by the ASM crew and exceptionally thick walls were noted, some of which had been reconstructed by the private owner of the site. Bedrock mortars also were recorded in the cavates. A number of artifacts were collected, including Verde Brown, Tuzigoot Red, and White Mountain Red Ware ceramics, which suggest this pueblo was built by the Sinagua post A.D. 1150 (Pilles 1981, 1996). The ASM recorders dated the site from AD 1200 to 1500, although Pilles (2012) has recently argued that the Sinagua abandoned the region by AD 1400.

In the 1980s, the preservation of the Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin took on additional importance. Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt visited the site along with Mark Michel, President of the Archaeological Conservancy, and Steward L. Udall, Chair of the Archaeological Conservancy Board, on February 29, 1984 (Archaeological Conservancy 1984) (Figure 12).

President Michel and James Walker, Southwest Regional Director for the Archaeological Conservancy, met with elders of the Hopi Tribe on Second Mesa to consult them about the site, in addition to the Thoeny ruins, another Southern Sinagua site in the Verde Valley. The Hopi Bluebird, Rattlesnake, Lizard, and Sand Clans trace their origins to the Sinagua pueblos of the Verde Valley (Ferguson and Lomaomvaya 1999). Fred Kabotie, Chairman of the Hopi Cultural Center, expressed support for preserving the sites and stated that "the protection and preservation of these ruins would greatly strengthen and enhance our ability to verify our oral histories regarding these sites" (Archaeological Conservancy 1984:3).

The Archaeological Conservancy was able to purchase the Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin and dedicated it as an archaeological preserve on July 27, 1985, four years after Mr. Thede's death. This purchase of the pueblo and its associated cavates was a major step toward insuring that the site will be preserved in perpetuity. In addition, Mr. Thede's daughter, Margaret, lives near the ruin and watches over it to prevent vandalism to the site.



Figure 12. Photograph of Mark Michel (left), Stewart L. Udall (center) and Governor Bruce Babbitt (right) touring the Atkeson Pueblo in February 1984 (courtesy of Peter Pilles).

In November 1987, Peter Pilles of the Coconino National Forest completed a National Preservation Needs Assessment for the Atkeson Pueblo. He reported that the tallest standing wall at that time was about 12 ft (3.7 m) in height and concluded that stabilization was needed before the walls fell over. The next year, from October 15 to 20, stabilization work was conducted at the site (Figures 12 and 13). The tallest standing walls, identified as Room 1, were repointed with mortar consisting of a mixture of 15 parts local soil, 1 part red sandy-clayey soil from Marshall Tank, and one-half part water (Coconino National Forest Office archaeology files). A 20-cm gap above the sixth course in the wall of Room 1 was filled with this mortar, as well as other walls.

A few years later, Pilles (1991) reported that two Sonoran mud turtle carapaces were given to him by someone who had collected them from the cavates at Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin. These turtles were identified as *Kinosternon Sonoriense* and were estimated to be 3 to 4 years in age. The Hopi used carapaces as rattles tied to their right legs, along with deer or sheep hoofs, during Katsina dances (Parsons 1996:384). Because turtles are water creatures, a turtle shell had to be smoked over by the chief of the Water Corn Clan before it could be used as a rattle (Parsons 1996:161). For the Zuni, the turtle shell rattles “makes the thunder come” (Bunzel 1932:1012). Turtle shells were also placed by the Zuni Rain Society on the winter ceremony altar at either side of the corn ear fetishes (Stevenson 1904).



Figure 12. Photograph of 1988 stabilization project at Atkeson Pueblo. Individuals in the photograph include Jaimie Gittings and Project Origins participants (courtesy of Peter Pilles).



Figure 13. Charlie Steger stabilizing wall of Room 1 at Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin on October 16, 1988 (courtesy of Peter Pilles).



Figure x. Margaret (left) and Jennie Thede (right) looking at stabilized wall in 1996
(Courtesy of Archaeological Conservancy)

Pilles (1996) later authored a detailed paper about the Sinagua during the Pueblo III period (A.D. 1150-1400). He noted that Sinagua pueblos typically grew through the simple addition of rooms to existing room blocks and he identified four different types of pueblo architectural styles: (1) massed room blocks, (2) plaza-oriented pueblos, (3) courtyard oriented pueblos, and (4) cluster-oriented pueblos (Pilles 1996:66). Atkeson Pueblo was considered a massed room block, in part because no plazas or courtyards were recorded by Fewkes (1912) at the site. The 24 rooms recorded by Fewkes' (1912:Figure 55) makes the Atkeson Pueblo a relatively large pueblo for the Sinagua, although more than 60 sites in the Verde Valley have been recorded containing 20 or more rooms (Pilles 2012).

VERDE VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGY CENTER MAPPING PROJECT

On April 26 and 27, 2013, the Verde Valley Archaeology Center conducting a mapping project of the Atkeson Pueblo on Oak Creek. Thirteen different individuals participated in the two-day mapping project, focusing on recording the visible walls of the pueblo. Approximately 12 hours were spent on mapping. Dr. Todd Bostwick oversaw the project and took photographs (N=51), Richard "Bud" Henderson collected the mapping data using a Brunton compass and a laser rangefinder (Figure 14), and Walter Gosart drafted the map using that data (Figure 15). A site datum was established on a high point east of the tallest and best preserved standing walls, which had previously been identified as Room 1 (Figures 16 and 17). No mapping was done of the cavates located to the south and east of the pueblo (Figure 18).



Figure 14. Bud Henderson using the laser rangefinder and Brunton compass, Jeanie Greiner recording the measurements, and Walter Gosart drawing the map at Atkeson Pueblo on Oak Creek.



Figure 15. Closeup of Walter Gosart drawing the Map of Atkeson Pueblo.



Figure 16. Atkeson Pueblo as seen from the road on the northwestern edge of the site, looking southeast. The standing walls in the distance are Room 1.



Figure 17. Atkeson Pueblo above cliff face on southeastern portion of the site, looking northwest. Room 1 is visible at the top center of the photograph. The corner wall of a pot-hunted room (Room 32) can be seen in the upper right portion of the photograph.



Figure 18. Atkeson Pueblo cave on east side of the site showing masonry wall, looking southwest.



Figure 19. Mapping crew locating room corners covered by creosote bush on the southwest side of Atkeson Pueblo, looking west.

Due to the thick cover of creosote bush, the crew spent considerable effort in locating room walls and corners (Figure 19). The location of questionable room corners were examined and confirmed by Todd Bostwick and James Graceffa, President of the Verde Valley Archaeology Center (VVAC). Altogether 33 rooms were mapped at the Atkeson Pueblo on Oak Creek by the VVAC (Figure 20).

Room 1 is the best preserved of all the rooms at the site, with its southwestern corner in good condition (Figure 21). This room is the one that is so prominently visible in the historic

photographs taken in the 1880s and 1890s by Mearns, Baer, Allen, and Fewkes.

The southern wall of Room 1 contains the tallest wall at the site, measured at 3.48 m in height during the VVAC mapping project. This is lower than the 20 ft (6.1 m) height that Fewkes (1912:189) recorded for the tallest wall and lower than other walls at the site which he recorded at 15 ft (4.6 m) in height. This difference in height of Room 1 may be due to the top of the wall eroding, or it may be in part because Fewkes measured the wall's height from a lower position inside the room before pot hunters and natural erosion raised the current level of the room's inside ground surface.

The southern wall of Room 1 contains the opening visible in the early historic photographs (see Figures 3 and 7). This opening was stabilized in the not-so-distant past by its former owner with a wooden frame that is now collapsed (Figures 22 and 23). This wooden frame needs to be rebuilt to stabilize the hole in the wall. The western wall of Room 1 is currently 3.2 m in height and the east wall is 2.2 m tall.

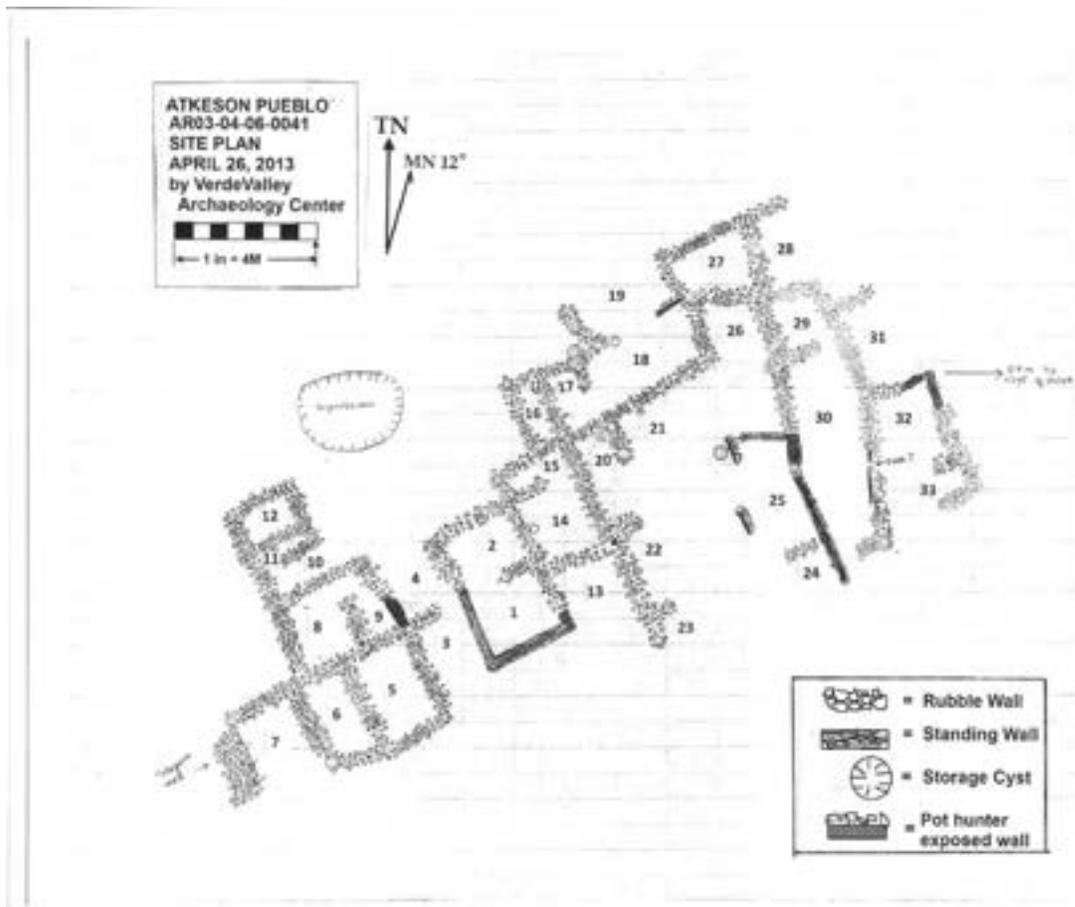


Figure 20. VVAC plan map of Atkeson Pueblo on Oak Creek, April 2013



Figure 21. Todd Bostwick standing next to southwest corner of Room 1 (Photograph by Keith Greiner)



Figure 22. South side of the southern wall of Room 1 showing collapsed wooden frame in wall opening, looking north

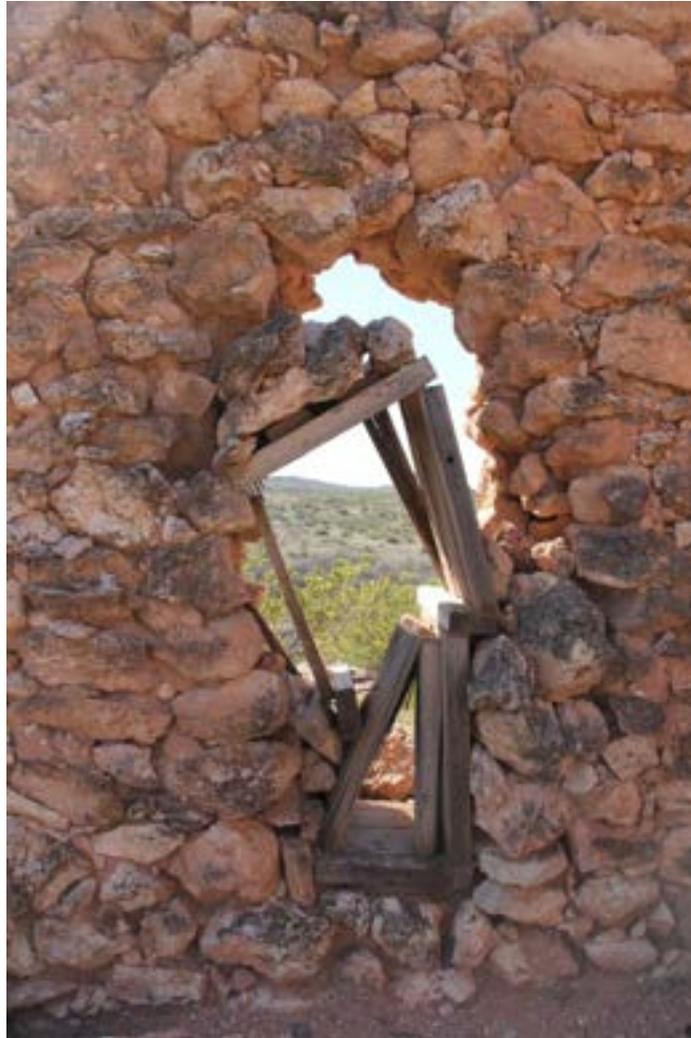


Figure 23. Closeup of collapsed wooden frame in south wall from inside of Room 1, looking south toward Oak Creek

The inside of the western wall of Room 1 also contained wood used to stabilize the wall in modern times. This wood consists of a thick, debarked, irregular-shaped tree limb inserted in an upright position, with a piece of flat, milled wood placed on top of the log (Figure 24).

The western wall of Room 1 contains two wooden beams that appear to be original (Figures 25 and 26). These wooden beams have rough ends that do not appear to be saw cut (Figure 26); the one to the left (southern) has been burned on its lower portion. They are both about 6 cm in diameter and are located on top of a large, flat wall stone that would have provided stability if these indeed are beams used for the base of an upper floor. The wooden beams are currently located about 90 cm from the bottom of the room, which is probably not the original floor surface, but fill from erosion and wall fall. The height of the two beams indicates that Room 1 was once at least two stories in height.



Figure 24. Wooden post supporting the inside of eroded west wall of Room 1, looking west



Figure 25. Inside of west wall of Room 1 showing wooden beams sticking out of wall. Scale is 10 cm



Figure 26. Closeup of wooden beams in the west wall inside Room 1.

One of the wooden beams (southernmost) in the west wall of Room 1 is visible on the other side of the wall, with the other beam hidden by a rock (Figure 27). This suggests that the room to the west of this wall also may have been at least two stories in height. Fewkes (1912:189) observed “projecting floor beams,” which combined with the height of the walls indicated to him that the structure was once three stories in height. Based on other pueblo structures still in use that he had seen, Fewkes (1912:189 footnote 2) guessed that the Atkeson/Oak Creek Ruin structure originally had “lateral entrances.”



Figure 27. Closeup of wooden beam on outside of west wall of Room 1. The second wooden beam (northern one, to the left in this photograph) is hidden by a rock behind the 10 cm scale.

The walls of Room 1 are relatively thick. A cross-section of the south wall is currently 55 cm or more in thickness (Figure 28). Many of the other walls at the site have collapsed, making it difficult

to determine their original thickness (Figure 29), but site records indicate that walls as thick as 70 cm have been recorded at the site.



Figure 28. Cross-section of the eastern edge of southern wall of Room 1. Mud has been added in modern times to stabilize the wall. Scale is 10 cm.



Figure 29. View of Room 1 in the background and collapsed wall of another room located to the northeast of Room 1.

Another well-preserved standing wall is located to the east of Room 1; this wall is the eastern wall of Rooms 24 and 25, and the western wall of Room 30 (Figure 30). This wall also has been stabilized by the addition of mud in modern times. It is currently at least 45 cm in thickness (Figure 31).



Figure 30. View of the west side of the eastern wall for Rooms 24 and 25 at Atkeson Pueblo, looking east. Oak Creek is in the background.



Figure 31. Cross-section of the eastern wall for Rooms 24 and 25, looking north. Scale is 10 cm.

This standing wall has a circular hole toward the southern end of the wall, which may be where a large wooden beam was once located (Figure 32). The hole has been partially filled in with rocks, probably during stabilization activities, but its interior is very smooth; the hole is approximately 48 cm in diameter (Figure 33). The hole is also visible on the reverse side of the wall, although it too has been partially filled with rocks.

A photograph taken of this wall by Edgar Mearns shows the west side of the wall with a circular hole towards its southern end (Figure 34). The position of this hole near the current surface indicates that considerable wall fall has filled in the room to the west of this wall (Rooms 24 and 25), and suggests that one of more of these rooms were once at least two-stories in height. It is also possible that this hole is not for a roof beam but a portal that provided a view to the eastern horizon, perhaps to watch the sun rise. Rooms to the east of this wall appear to have been lower in elevation, allowing for a horizon view.



Figure 32. East side of eastern wall for Rooms 24 and 25 at Atkeson Pueblo. Arrow points to hole in wall (see Figure 29).



Figure 33. Close-up of circular hole in east side of the standing wall that divides Room 25 and Room 30. It is partially filled with rocks, but its smooth interior is very visible at the top of the hole. Scale is 10 cm.



Figure 34. Mearns' 1887 photograph of the west side of the standing wall that divides Room 25 and Room 30, looking east. The circular hole in the wall is visible on the lower left portion of the wall (courtesy of Library of Congress).

Just east of the eastern wall for Rooms 24 and 25 is an exposed room (Room 32) that has been extensively pot hunted, exposing a portion of its lower wall (Figure 35). The east wall of this room looks like it have been exposed for some time since it has not outside plaster and almost no mortar is visible between the wall stones. Although the site has been pot hunted for many years previous to its acquisition by the Archaeological Conservancy in 1985, no other rooms have such obvious evidence of systematic excavations of an entire room. However, it is also possible that Room 1 was systematically excavated by pot-hunters since the current ground surface inside it is relatively level. It is very possible that other rooms have been pot hunted, but the pot hunter's holes are not visible due to erosion and wall fall.

Rooms 3 and 5 are located to the west of Room 1 (Figure 36). The low wall that serves as the western wall of Room 3 and the eastern wall of Room 5 suggest that these rooms may not have had multiple stories. Prehistoric pueblos often had various levels, with rooms containing more than one story located adjacent to rooms with only one story.

Just to the north of this room is a short section of another standing wall (Figure 37). This wall is the eastern wall of Room 9 and the western wall of Room 4; it is visible on some of the historic photographs.



Figure 35. Exposed east wall of a small pot hunted room (Room 32). Oak Creek is in the background.
Red flagging tape marks the southern edge of the pueblo.



Figure 36. Walter Gosart inside Room 5 west of Room 1 at Atkeson Pueblo, looking south toward Oak Creek. The red pin flag marks a room corner. The Verde River is visible in the far background to the right. The red flagging tape in the background is the northern edge of the pueblo.



Figure 37. Standing wall northwest of Room 1 (in background), looking southeast. This wall is the west wall of Room 4 and the eastern wall of Room 9.

At the northern edge of the site, downslope from the main room block is a large depression. Fewkes (1912:190) included this feature on his map and suggested it was a reservoir and not a kiva (a Pueblo ceremonial chamber). Fewkes (1912:Figure 55) mapped this depression as circular, but our mapping indicates it is more oval in shape, measuring about 10 x 14 m in size (Figure 38).



Figure 38. Depression at Atkeson Pueblo. Room 1 is in the background. Scale is one meter.

Artifacts are numerous around and inside the depression. Several obsidian tools were observed during our mapping project, including two small obsidian projectile points and a bifacial tool. One of these projectile points is a side-notched form with a slightly concave base (Figure 39). This point is 1.2 cm in length and 2 cm in width. Its tip had broken and been resharpened. The other projectile point was 1.5 cm in length and 1 cm in width (Figure 40). Its base was broken off. The thin, obsidian bifacial tool was 3.5 cm in length and 3 cm in length. Its tip also had been broken.



Figure 39. Obsidian side-notched projectile point found near the depression at Atkeson Pueblo. Scale is 10 cm.



Figure 40. Obsidian projectile point with missing based found near the depression at Atkeson Pueblo. Scale is 10 cm.

Ceramic sherds were observed on the north slope of the pueblo, most likely thrown away in the pueblo's trash area. One of these sherds was identified as Homolovi Polychrome (Figure 41). Another sherd was identified as Jeddito Black-on-yellow (Figure 42). Both of these ceramic types are considered ancestral Hopi types, supporting the Hopi's claim to have an association with the site. Jeddito Yellow Ware typically dominates the tradeware assemblages at Southern Sinagua sites, occurring in high frequencies at Montezuma Castle (Jackson and Van Valkenburg 1954:41) and at Tuzigoot (Caywood and Spicer 1935:48). The Hopi Yellow Ware ceramics at Atkeson Pueblo originated at the Hopi Mesas and were likely transported into the Verde Valley by way of Beaver Creek over a well-established trail, named the "Palatkwabi Trail" (Byrkitt 1988). This route extended south from First Mesa to Winslow, through Chavez Pass, to Stoneman Lake, and then down into the Verde Valley by way of Beaver Creek (Pilles 1981:15-16), or as it did in later historic times, via Dry Beaver Creek.



Figure 44. Homolovi Polychrome sherd found on the north slope of Atkeson Pueblo. Scale is 10 cm.



Figure 42. Jeddito Black-on-yellow rim sherd found on the north slope of Atkeson Pueblo. Scale is 10 cm.

DISCUSSION

In April 2013, the Verde Valley Archaeology Center conducted a mapping project at the Atkeson Pueblo on Oak Creek on behalf of the Archaeological Conservancy, which owns and protects the site. This project was able to map at least 34 rooms, considerably more rooms than Fewkes (1912: Figure 55) had mapped in 1906, but very close to the estimated 35 rooms as stated on the Archaeological Conservancy's bronze plaque erected in 1994 at the site. The VVAC map is somewhat similar to Fewkes' (1912:Figure 55) map, but there are some significant differences. In particular, Fewkes' map shows walls around the perimeter of the pueblo that were not obvious to the VVAC mappers. These walls may have eroded and the stones fallen downslope, or they may have been covered with dirt by the passage of time. The clearing of the dense creosote brush at the site could reveal additional walls and rooms. There are a number of other Southern Sinagua sites that contain more rooms than the Atkeson Pueblo (Adler and Johnson 1996; Fish and Fish 1977; Pilles 2012), and Pilles (1996:69-70) has proposed that there was a four-tier settlement hierarchy in the Verde Valley. Sugarloaf Ruin, located on a hilltop next to Oak Creek less than 2 miles (3.2 km) northeast of Atkeson Pueblo, is considered one of the "chief villages" (Pilles 1996). Nonetheless, the presence of the turquoise encrusted bird pendant at Atkeson Pueblo may indicate the site's political importance.

The rooms at Atkeson Pueblo are relatively large in size. Pilles (1981) has noted that Sinagua rooms are larger than those at sites in the Kayenta and Winslow regions, which he partially attributes to the lack of identifiable storage space at Sinagua sites. It is interesting that there are a several small rooms at Atkeson Pueblo (Rooms 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, and 17) and these may have served as store rooms. A small "storage cyst" was identified during the VVAC mapping project on the northwest side of Room 25.

One of the unusual features at the site is the depression, interpreted by Fewkes (1912) as a reservoir. Other interpretations are possible: is it a large pithouse or other architectural feature, or a quarry, or mortar borrow pit? Only excavations of the depression can better determine its function. Another unusual feature is the circular hole with smooth sides in the eastern wall of Rooms 24 and 25 – is it a roof beam hole, or is it a portal for viewing the eastern horizon? The two turtle carapaces discovered in the cavates at the site are intriguing. Do they support Fewkes' idea that the pueblo was used for domestic purposes while the cavates served a ceremonial function, which could explain why no kivas are present? In this regard, it is interesting to note that inside the cavates recorded by Mindeleff (1896) southeast of Camp Verde, Morris (1928:93-94) found several prayer sticks, as well as the burial of a child wrapped in embroidered cloth.

In conclusion, the Verde Valley Archaeology Center mapping project at Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin has been very productive. It has compiled existing data previously recorded for the site, has provided a measured map, has assigned numbers to the rooms, and has documented the current condition of the standing walls.

FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Because of its good state of preservation, and the lack of systematic investigations at the site, Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin still has great research potential which can be accomplished with

limited testing and surface collections. Pilles (2013) has outlined a program for future research at this important site. He suggests that a wall testing program would be very helpful in generating a more complete map of the pueblo and would reveal wall abutments which could show how the pueblo grew through time – by additions of room blocks, or one room at a time? This limited testing program would consist of the excavations of 1 x 1 m test pits in the corners of certain rooms, supplemented by augering, to determine wall abutments, the depth of room floors, and the original wall heights.

Another important research question is whether or not the site was involved in argillite exchange during the Tuzigoot phase. This research question could be addressed through controlled pin-flagging and systematic surface scrapping for the collection and analysis of argillite artifacts, both finished products and manufacturing debris. The argillite collected from the site could then be compared with the argillite from the prehistoric mine in Chino Valley, north of Prescott (Bartlett 1939).

Finally, the unpublished field notes of James Simmons (n.d.) from his excavations at Atkeson Pueblo/Oak Creek Ruin need to be carefully examined and his findings plotted on the VVAC map, if possible. Those field notes are on file at the ASM in Tucson.

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6.2 Ottens Pueblo (Sugarloaf Ruin)

The Sugarloaf Ruin Group is located on a mesa and nearby hilltop near Cornville in central Arizona (Township 15 Range 4, Section 7) adjacent to Oak Creek, a perennial stream which would have provided a year-round source of water and riparian resources to the prehistoric inhabitants of the area (Figure 1). Those inhabitants have been called the Southern Sinagua, the southern branch of the Sinagua Culture that occupied an area of 3,346 sq miles in central and northern Arizona (Colton 1946; Pilles 1981, 1994; Powers and Pearson 2008). Sugarloaf Ruin is one of three Southern Sinagua pueblos containing more than 20 rooms and located on the lower reach of Oak Creek; the other two are the Cornville Ruin and Oak Creek Ruin (aka Atkeson Pueblo).

The Southern Sinagua region encompasses the upper and middle reaches of the Verde Valley, between Perkinsville on the north and the confluence with the East Verde River on the south, the Black Hills on the west, and the Mogollon Rim to the east (Pilles 1996:59). These industrious people occupied two major environmental zones – pinyon-juniper forests at higher elevations and the Verde lowlands consisting of grasslands and creosote flats.



Figure 1. Sugarloaf Hill where the Ottens (Sugarloaf) Pueblo is located, looking southeast. Oak Creek is in the foreground.

The Southern Sinagua time period is divided into a series of phases, with the earliest phase beginning in AD 650 (Breternitz 1969; Pilles 1996). For the first several centuries the Southern Sinagua lived in pit houses that varied in size (Deats 2012). Masonry pueblos and cliff dwellings became popular as domestic structures after AD 1150, during the Honanki and Tuzigoot phases (Pilles 1996), although pit houses with masonry walls also were built at that time (Deats 2012). Well

known examples include Tuzigoot and Montezuma Castle National Monuments. During the Tuzigoot Phase (AD 1300-1450), the Southern Sinagua aggregated into multi-storied pueblos containing more than 20 rooms, many of them located close to permanent water sources or on hilltops, such as Sugarloaf Ruin (Figure 2). In addition to pit houses and masonry pueblos, the Southern Sinagua also built smaller field houses used on a seasonal basis, often near their agricultural fields where they grew maize, squash, beans, and cotton (Fish and Fish 1977; Pilles 1978). A range of agricultural methods were used including irrigation and dry farming techniques such as check dams in washes, terraces, raised garden beds, channeling of slope wash, and other water catchment devices (Ehrhardt 2012; Fish and Fish 1984).



Figure 2. Map showing the Sugarloaf Ruin and other late Southern Sinagua sites in the vicinity, including Tuzigoot and Montezuma Castle (from Pilles 1996: Figure 5.1).

The Southern Sinagua buried their dead typically in extended supine positions, but also occasionally in semi-flexed positions (Spurr and Deats 2012). The heads of the deceased were oriented in all cardinal directions, although many of them with the head toward the east or southeast. Burials were interred primarily in extramural spaces outside domestic structures, including midden areas, but also in the fill or on the floor of abandoned pit houses and beneath the floors of masonry rooms, perhaps marking familial claims to land and habitation areas (Caywood and Spicer 1935; Spurr and Deats 2012). Pottery and jewelry was often buried with the dead as grave offerings, and some individuals had their faces or other body parts painted red, blue, or green. Wrapping the body in layers of textiles was not unusual during the later time period. Different amounts and types of burial offerings suggest that some of the Southern Sinagua had achieved a higher status than other individuals (Anderson 1992).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH AT THE SUGARLOAF RUIN GROUP

In preparation for this excavation project, the author examined the site files at the Arizona State Museum, Museum of Northern Arizona, and the Coconino National Forest Office. The most comprehensive collection of data on the site was located in the office of the Coconino National Forest Service Archaeologist, Peter Pilles.

Sugarloaf Ruin has been known about since the late 1800s, although no systematic excavations have ever been conducted. It has been extensively pot hunted, however, and has been the subject of considerable controversy due to an aborted attempt by a private land owner to build a house on top of the pueblo (see brief discussion below).

Edgar Mearns, a US Army surgeon and naturalist stationed at Camp Verde from 1884 to 1888, visited Sugarloaf Ruin during his extensive study of ancient ruins of the Verde Valley (Mearns 1890). Unlike some of the other ruins he visited, Mearns apparently did not photograph the Sugarloaf Ruin (James and Pilles 2012). He did note that the Sugarloaf Ruin was located about 125 ft (38 m) above the adjacent mesa (Mearns 1890:18).

Cosmos Mindeleff (1896) of the Bureau of American Ethnology conducted a reconnaissance survey of the Verde River in the 1890s from Camp Verde south to its confluence with the Salt River. He included Sugarloaf Ruin on his map of ancient ruins of the Verde Valley (Mindeleff 1896:Plate XI).

In 1930, Richard Piela recorded a number of sites in central and southern Arizona for the Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA). He discovered four Southern Sinagua sites in the Sugarloaf Ruin area. Piela (1930) gave the pueblo on top of the hilltop NA 1269 (later given site numbers AR 03-04-06-78; AZ 0:5:20 ASM; Verde 5:12 GP), a three room masonry site to the northeast as NA 1270 (AR 03-04-06-79), and three additional pueblos further north near Jordan's Ranch as NA 1265, NA 1266 (AR 03-04-06-76; AZ 0:5:19 ASM) and NA 1267 (AR 03-04-06-77; AZ 0:5:18 ASM; Verde 5:10 GP) (Figure 3), but his placement of these sites appears to be inaccurate (the MNA site files locate NA 1265 to the east, on the other side of Oak Creek). This group of sites later become known as the Sugarloaf Ruin Group. Piela (1930:12) noted that Site NA 1269 on the hilltop covered one and one-half acres and that "most of the rooms are two stories high." He also observed a large court in the center of the mass of rooms at the site and commented that pottery and wood specimens were abundant.

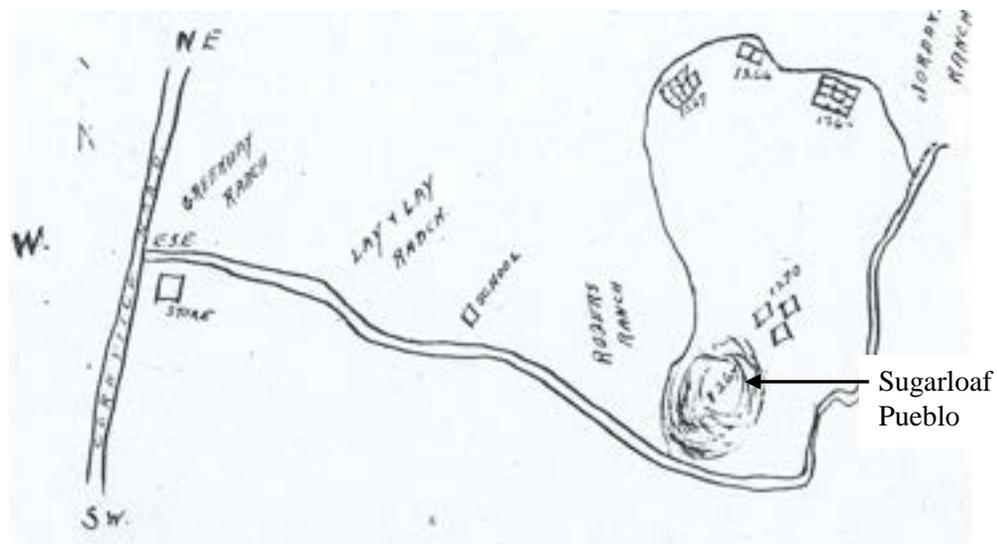


Figure 3. Sketch map of the Sugarloaf Ruin drawn by Richard Piela of the Museum of Northern Arizona in 1930. Sugarloaf Pueblo is site number NA 1269.

Harold Colton and Katherine Bartlett of MNA revisited Piela's sites in 1939 according to the MNA site cards. They noted that NA 1269 contained 55 to 65 rooms and that its central plaza was 60 x 75 ft (18.3 x 22.9 m) in size. Analysis of ceramics from the site by Colton recorded Jeddito Black-on-yellow, Jeddito Black-on-orange, Winslow polychrome, Tuzigoot Red, and Tonto Red (Coconino National Forest site files). The MNA site card also indicates that NA 1270 is a "burial ground in sand dune" with a crude, small structure about 30 x 30 ft (9.1 x 9.1 m) in size containing one to three rooms. However, the MNA site map shows this site located to the south of the hilltop, rather than to the northeast as mapped by Piela (1930).

The Sugarloaf Ruin Group also was visited by Frank Mitvalsky (aka Midvale) to collect ceramics as part of the Gila Pueblo's (GP) charting of ceramic types across Arizona to track the distribution of red-on-buff (Hohokam) ceramics. This data was included in Gila Pueblo Medallion Papers (Gladwin and Gladwin 1930), in which they argued that the Verde Valley was marked by violent conflicts during its later period.

In the early 1930s, an avocational archaeologist from the Prescott area named James Simmons undertook excavations at Sugarloaf Ruin. He is reported to have found a toad pendant with a shell backing (Fowler and Wilcox 2003:Appendix). His field notes are on file at the Arizona State Museum.

Earl Jackson, later custodian of Montezuma Castle, conducted a survey of the Verde River drainage system for his master's thesis at the University of Arizona under Byron Cummings. Jackson (1933) also noted that late pueblo sites in the Verde Valley were located in defensive locations such as on hilltops, which he attributed to internal and external conflicts due to population growth and inadequate agricultural land to support the local inhabitants.

Sugarloaf Pueblo was later excavated by a pot hunter who removed at least two bodies from the site. He donated these materials in February 1969 to California State University-Long Beach. According to Keith A. Nixon (1990), a child and an infant were removed from a pit covered by sandstone slabs in the northwest portion of the pueblo.

Sugarloaf Ruin continued to be pot hunted through the years. In 1990, the public's attention was focused on the hilltop site when its private landowner, Robert Cristall, decided to build a house on top of the ruin. When he cut a road up the north side of the hill and a burial was uncovered the citizens of nearby Cornville became upset and they mobilized opposition to his construction plans, including the Hopi Tribe, the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office, and local newspapers. Opposition against the destruction of the Sugarloaf Ruin resulted in someone vandalizing the backhoe that was parked on the site, with battery acid poured into its engine block and its oil and fuel tanks filled with sand and dirt (Dudley 1990). State-wide attention to the destruction of the human remains in the road cut contributed to the Arizona State Legislature passing legislation to protect human remains on both private and state land. In November 1990, the Archaeological Conservancy began successful negotiations to purchase the site for below market value, saving the site as a preserve. On March 3, 1991, a sunset walk was held with Hopi Tribal representatives and 200 Cornville residents to celebrate the preservation of 18 acres by the Archaeological Conservancy (Khouzam 1991). Figure 4 shows Sugarloaf Pueblo and its surrounding archaeological preserve.

In November 1991, Peter Pilles, Jr., Archaeologist for the Coconino National Forest, conducted an Arizona Site Steward training session at the Sugarloaf Pueblo. Pilles (1991a) examined 109 sherds that were present on the surface of the site. He found a variety of ceramic types including Sosi Black-on-white, Red Mesa Black-on-white, Flagstaff Black-on-white, Walnut Black-on-white, Kiet Siel Black-on-red, Jeddito Yellow ware, and Gila Polychrome. Jeddito Yellow ware from the Hopi Mesa region dominated the assemblage (82 percent), followed by ceramics from the Winslow region (11 percent), the White Mountains (6 percent), and the Salado region (2 percent). These ceramics indicate that the Sinagua occupants of the Sugarloaf Pueblo were engaged in an extensive trade network. They also date the Sugarloaf pueblo to the early and late Tuzigoot phase, and Pilles suggests the pueblo probably was constructed no earlier than AD 1275. Similar to other Sinagua pueblos in the Verde Valley region, the site was abandoned around AD 1400. Pilles (1991b) suggested Sugarloaf pueblo may have been destroyed by fire. He also noted that the plaza was unusual for Verde Valley Sinagua sites.

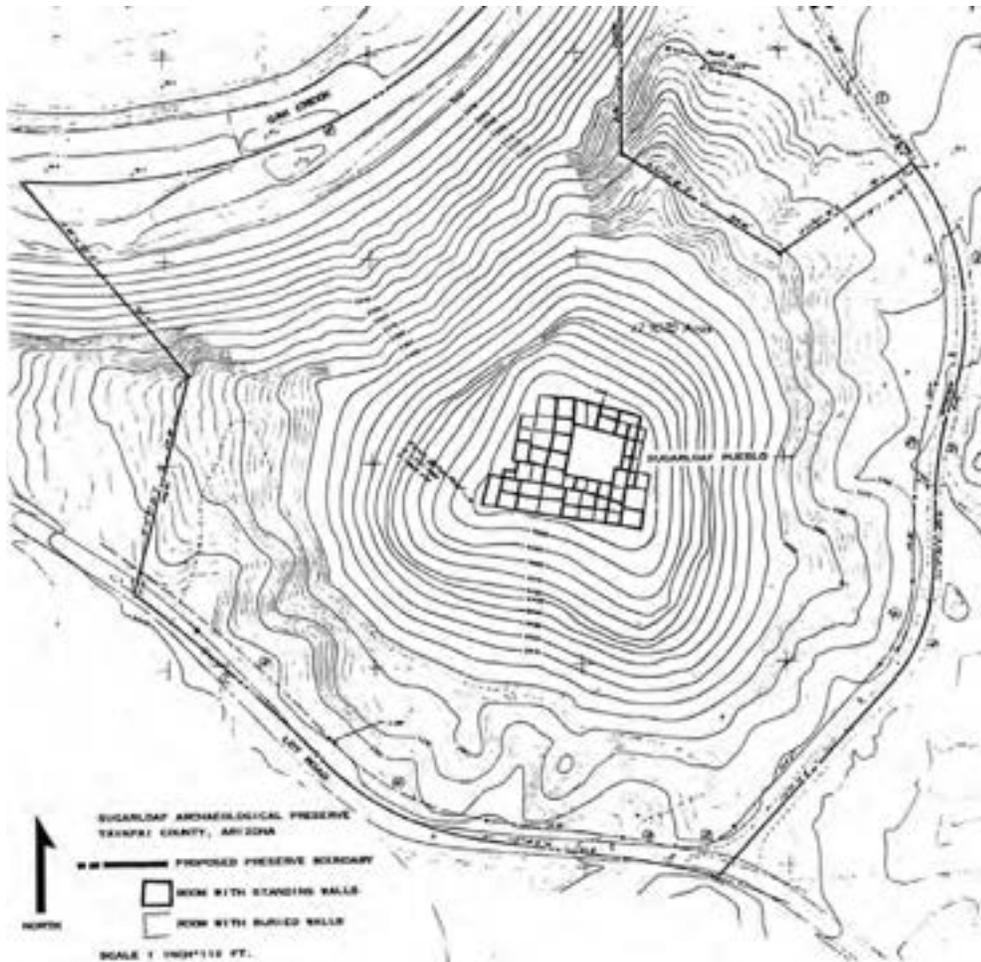


Figure 4. Map of Ottens (Sugarloaf) Pueblo, Archaeological Conservancy property, and the private road adjacent to the hilltop on which the pueblo is located. Courtesy of Coconino National Forest. The pueblo plan view was drawn by Peter Pilles based on an aerial photograph.



Figure 5. Ceramic sherds present on the surface of the sandy terrace



Figure 6. Obsidian flake located on the surface of the sandy terrace

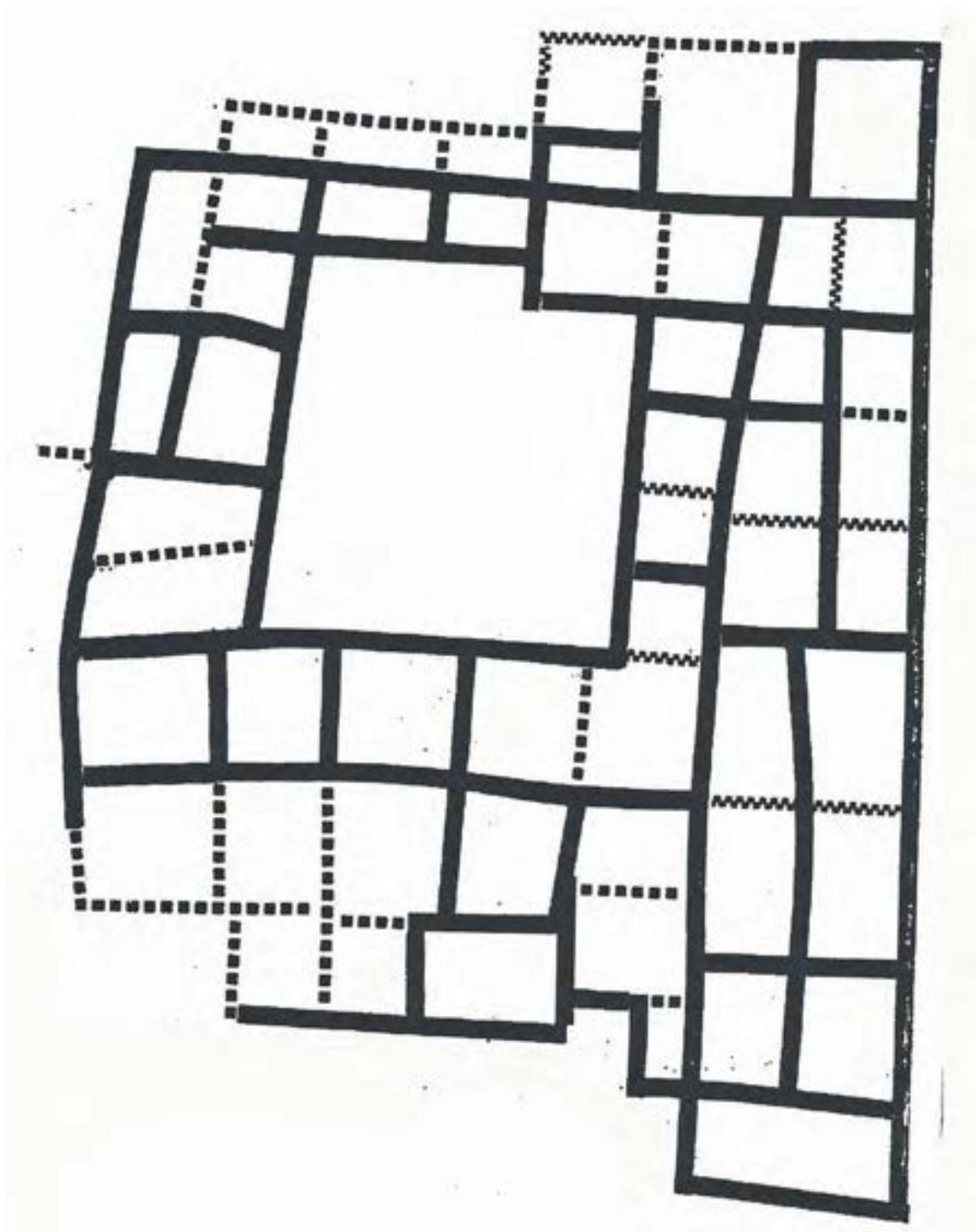


Figure 7. Ottens Pueblo site map

Site File
AR-03-04-2078
NA: 1269B

MNA: MUSEUM OF NORTHERN ARIZONA

State: ARIZONA County: YAVAPAI T. 15 R. 4 Sec. 15 SECTION SEVEN

Drainage: Primary: OWL CREEK Secondary: VERDE RIVER

Terrain Ref. Points

Nearest Trail: DIET ROAD SOUTH FROM COCAVILL Road: DIET Through: COCAVILL / S.M.

Map Ref. _____ Elev. _____ Photo No. _____

Add. Date _____

Culture: SOUTHERN SONORAN Development: PIT Dates: _____

Type of Site: PUEBLO ON TOP OF HILL Exposure: OPEN

Extent: 300 YARDS IN DIAMETER Condition: STONE WALLS

Dwellings: 4x5 OR 100 ROOMS Storage: POSSIBLE Construction: LIMESTONE-SANDSTONE

Shards: 4x5 Stone: 4x5 Perishables: POSSIBLE

Trash: 4x5-ON-SLOPE Irrigation: ? Arable Land: TO NORTH-SOUTH

Petroglyphs: _____ Trolls: None Seen Nearby Stone: Seen

Other: _____ Non-Diag. Cult. _____

Patterning: LOW GRADE AT W. END IN POSITION AND PROBABLE LAYOUT: DIAGONAL

Add. Date _____

Ecol. Zone: UPPER SONORAN Geology: LIMESTONE

Topography: ON TOP OF SMALL HILL

Flora & Fauna: CREOSOTE

Nearest Water: OWL CREEK Perm. Water: OWL CREEK

Resources _____

Add. Date _____

Recom. for Excav. _____ Excav./Tested _____ Date _____

Prev. Investig. _____

Designation: SUGARLOAF RUIN Records: AR-03-04-06-78



Figure 8. Museum of Northern Arizona site card for Ottens (Sugarloaf) Ruin