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David T. Kirkpatrick

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THE PREHISTORY OF NORTHEASTERN NEW MEXICO

DAVID T. KIRKPATRICK
Department of Anthropology
Washington State University
Pullman, Washington

INTRODUCTION

The prehistory of northeastern New Mexico is relatively unknown when compared to the rest of New Mexico. Wendorf (1960) and, more recently, Thums (1976) have summarized the prehistoric and historic archaeology. Only the prehistory of the area, emphasizing the sites in the field conference vicinity will be discussed. For the purposes of this paper, northeastern New Mexico is the area east of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, north of State Highway 64, south of the Colorado boundary, and west of the Texas and Oklahoma borders (Fig. 1).

PALEO-INDIAN BISON HUNTERS

In 1925 Fred J. Howarth and Carl Schwachheim of Raton, New Mexico found a group of bones eroding from the bank of the Cimarron River (Dry Cimarron), near Folsom, New Mexico. They reported their discovery to J. D. Figgins of the Colorado Museum of Natural History who initiated excavations in 1926. The bone bed was exposed below 6 to 8 ft of overburden. During the excavations two fluted points were recovered from the loose matrix and a third point was found in association with extinct bison bones. A block of matrix containing the point and bones was removed and shipped to Denver for further study. Although Figgins (1927) believed there was an association between the man-made tools and the extinct bison, other archaeologists seriously questioned the relationship (see discussion by Cordell).

During the 1927 field season four more Folsom points were recovered in loose matrix. A fifth point, found *in situ*, was clearly associated with bison rib bones. Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., and A. V. Kidder responded to telegram invitations to visit the site. They confirmed the association between the Folsom points and extinct bison. During the 1928 excavations more Folsom points with bison bones were again viewed by more specialists. After this the Folsom site was accepted as the first site with man associated with Pleistocene bison (Wormington, 1957).

Folsom points have been found in other areas of northeastern New Mexico. A single Folsom point base was found by a Cimarron resident near Van Bremmer Creek, ten miles northeast of Cimarron and fifty miles southwest of the Folsom site (Glassow, 1972). Hammack (1965) found fragments of two Folsom points in LA 5559 on the Canadian River, but Taos Black-on-white pottery (A.D. 1150 to 1250) was also found on the site. Since manufacturing debris was not recovered, Hammack suggests the Folsom points were probably collected by later prehistoric peoples. Baker and Campbell (1960) reported on a number of Paleo-Indian points from northeastern and southern New Mexico. Baker, an amateur archaeologist, collected points between 1930 and 1955; his collection includes three Folsom point basal fragments from the Ute-Carrizo locality near Bueyeros, New Mexico.

ARCHAIC HUNTERS AND GATHERERS

The Pigeon Cliffs site (Steen, 1955) is located on a high terrace of the Cieneguilla Creek, twelve miles northeast of

Clayton, New Mexico. The Archaic material is found in the Clayton Horizon, a gray soil containing bone fragments, charcoal, and lithic debris. A hearth of rock and burnt clay was found, filled with charcoal and rock spalls. The lithic assemblage included a large stemmed and tanged projectile point, an alibates flint graver, and lithic debris. Bison head and leg bones were found near the hearth but not in it. This feature could be the result of a later occupation of the site. The graver was associated with these bones. Wendorf (1960) reports a date of 8282 ± 1000 years on charcoal from the hearth. A mano and metate, resembling those from the Sulfur Springs stage of the Cochise Culture, were found in the stream bank. Earlier occupation of the site is suggested by a re-worked Clovis point also found in the stream bed (Steen, 1955).

Montgomery (1964) excavated a small rockshelter at Rock Lake, fourteen miles east of Las Vegas, New Mexico. The site contained the Harrell point type which is common at Pecos Pueblo. Ceramics included Taos Incised, Taos Indented, Talpa Black-on-white, and Taos plainware which date after A.D. 1000 (Weatherington, 1968); however, Montgomery feels that some of the points may be pre-ceramic in age.

E. B. Renaud (1930, 1937) excavated several caves, rockshelters, and "fumeroles" along the Cimarron River (Dry Cimarron) of northeastern New Mexico. Renaud's brief descriptions suggest that the "Fumeroles People" had an Archaic-like culture. They were hunters and gatherers who lived seasonally in rockshelters and hunted deer, bison and rabbits using stone tools made by percussion techniques.

In the Cimarron District (Fig. 2) near the village of Cimarron, Glassow (1972) has recovered Archaic materials from two rockshelters. Cimarron 42 (CI 42) is located in the Cimarron Canyon west of Cimarron. Several large, heavily patinated, basalt and hornfels projectile points and other stone tools were recovered. Middle Ponil 17, in Middle Ponil Canyon, yielded artifacts similar to CI 42 and a single alibates "tear-drop" end scraper. Glassow (1972) sees a similarity between these points and the stemmed and indented base points of the northern Picosas described by Irwin-Williams (1967).

ANASAZI FARMERS

The Cimarron District (Fig. 2) is the most intensively studied area in northeastern New Mexico. In 1929, 1934, and 1935, E. B. Renaud conducted the first archaeological surveys in this area. He located ten sites between Raton, Cimarron, and Springer, three of which are between Colfax and Cimarron (Renaud, 1937). Unfortunately he does not provide descriptions of the sites. Mera (1935) collected sherds in the area for his publication, "Ceramic clues to the prehistory of north-central New Mexico."

Until recently there was no detailed cultural chronology for the Cimarron District. Using his survey and excavation data plus previous work by Bogan (1946), Lutes (1959), Gunnerson (1959, 1969), Alpers (1963), and Skinner (1964), Glassow

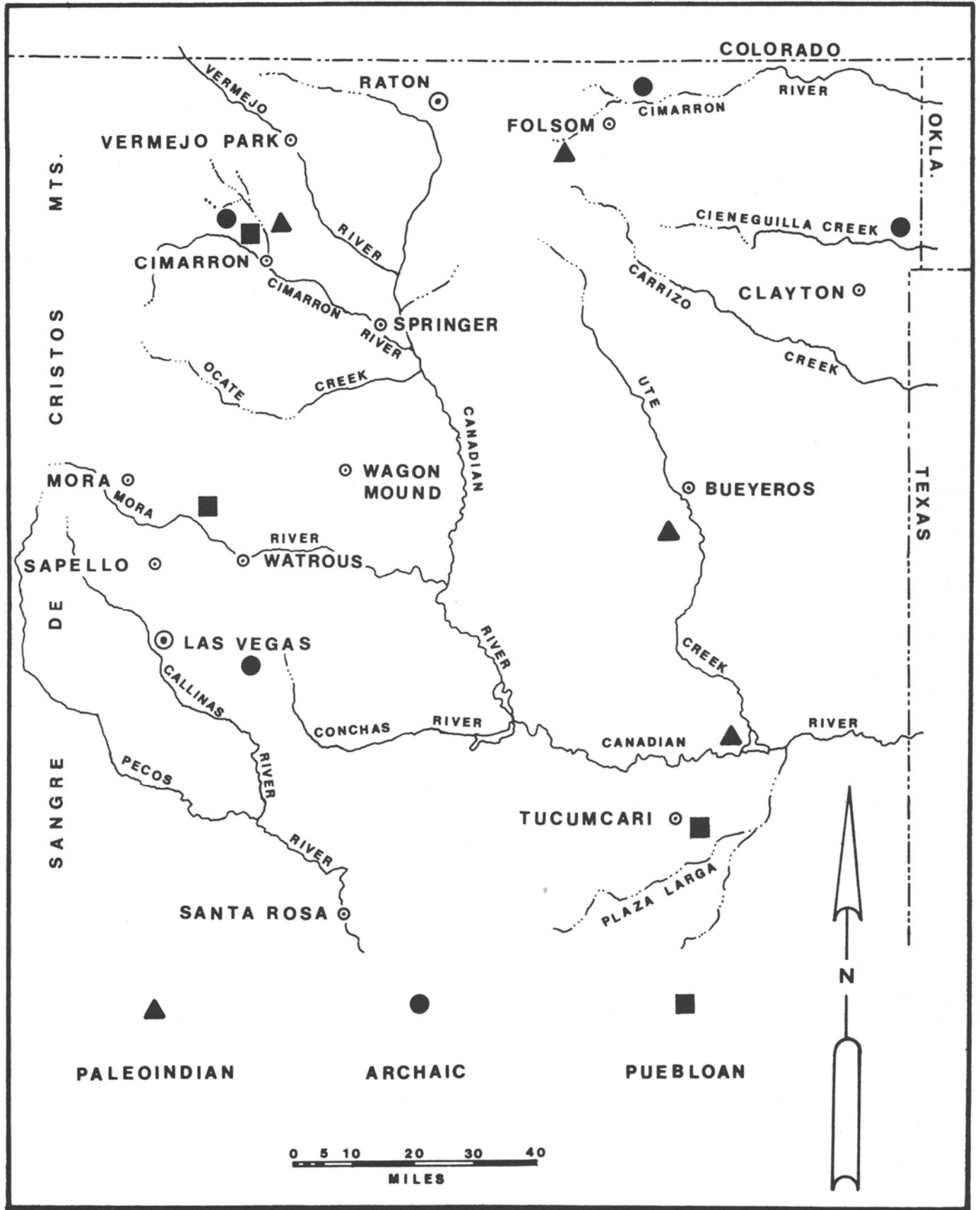


Figure 1. Map of northeastern New Mexico.

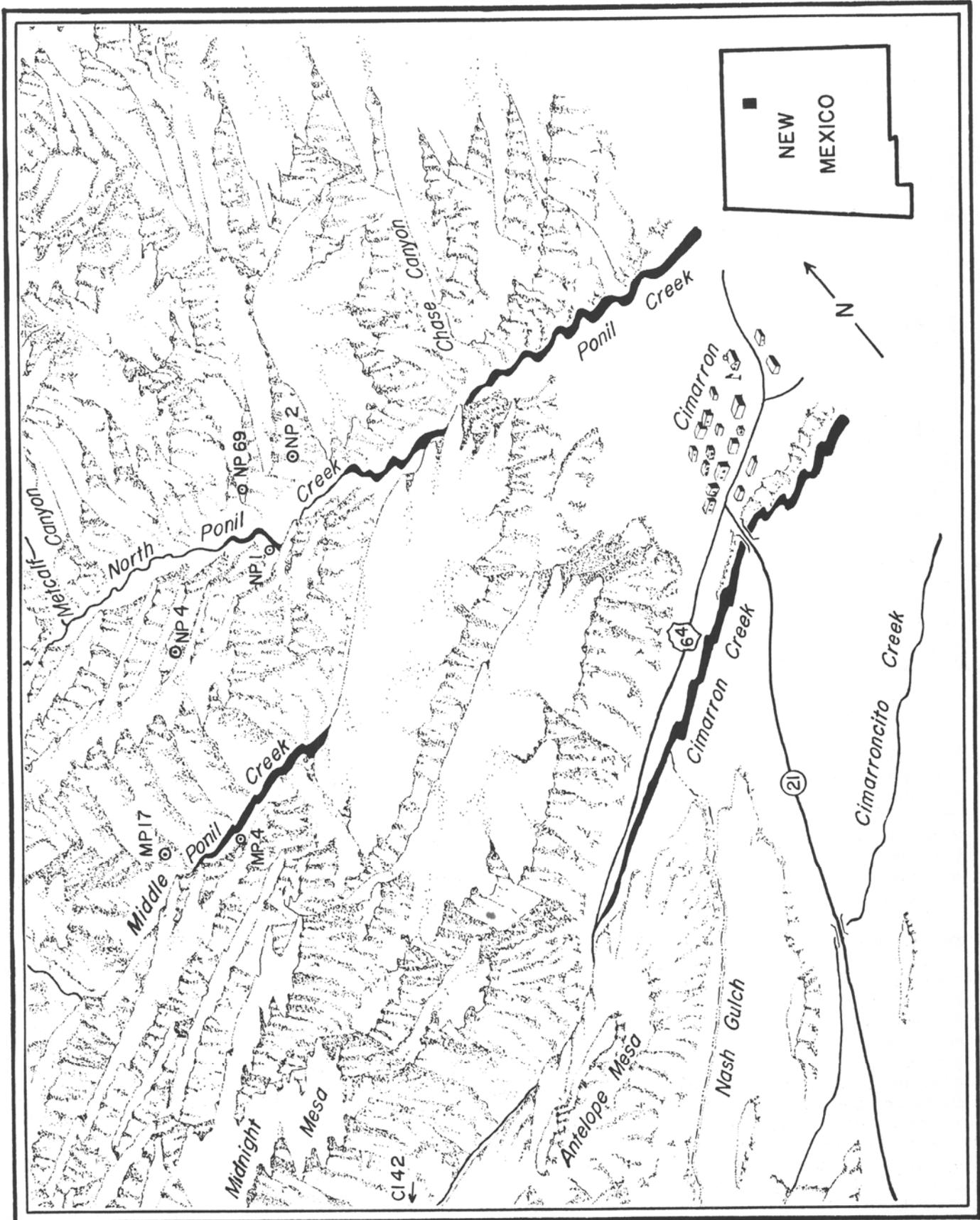


Figure 2. Map of the central area of the Cimarron District showing the location of several archaeology sites.

Table 1: Cimarron District Chronology¹

Period or Phase Name	Approximate Duration	Dating Method	Dating Criteria
Jicarilla Phase	A.D. 1750-1900	Ceramic	Cimarron Micaceous
Cojo Phase	A.D. 1550-1750	Ceramic	Ocate Micaceous
Cimarron Phase	A.D. 1200-1300	Ceramic	Cimarron Plain; Neck-banded, Incised, Punctate and/or Santa Fe B/W
Ponil Phase	A.D. 1100-1250	Ceramic	Taos Incised or Punctate
Excritores Phase	A.D. 900-1100	Ceramic	Kiathuthlanna or Red Mesa B/W
Pedregoso Phase	A.D. 700-900	Radio-carbon	1200+80; 1195+80 (UCLA 1369a, 1369b)
Vermejo Phase	A.D. 400-700	Radio-carbon	1460+50 (UCLA 1407); circular stone wall structures
Archaic Period	pre-A.D. 400	Projectile point styles	Stemmed dart-points
Lithic Period	?	Projectile point styles	Folsom point

¹After Glassow 1972: Table 1.

(1972) has proposed a chronology (Table 1). The Paleo-Indian and Archaic periods have been discussed previously.

The Vermejo Phase (Basketmaker II) is the first Puebloan occupation of the Cimarron District. They built circular stone houses on bluffs above the canyon floors. The projectile points are less than 1.6 cm in length and grinding slabs are more common than metates. Corn has been found in these sites. MP 4, a typical Vermejo site, is a circular stone structure about 15 ft in diameter with stone walls at least 3 ft high. The roof was supported by uprights inside the house. The site dates A.D. 510 (1460 ± 50, UCLA 1407). Storage facilities and pottery have not been found here or at other Vermejo sites. The shallow midden deposits may indicate a seasonal occupation, possibly winter (Glassow, 1972).

The Pedregoso Phase (Basketmaker III) is represented by the E component of North Ponil 1, located on a terrace above the valley floor (Fig. 3a). The E component, characterized by underground bottle-shaped storage cists and roasting ovens of various sizes, very dense scatters of fist-sized, fire-cracked rock, several varieties of fire pits and hearths, linear rock alignments, barrow pits, and at least two shallow pithouses, dates about A.D. 750 (1200 ± 80, UCLA 1369 and 1195 ± 80, UCLA 1369b). Approximately a dozen plain thick pot sherds have been recovered. Metates are the one-open-end trough type and grinding slabs are still present (Glassow, 1972).

The Escritores Phase sites (Fig. 3b) contain Kiatuthlana and/or Red Mesa Black-on-white pottery associated with ceramics similar to Kana's Gray. The houses are circular pithouses with a four post roof support, collared fireplaces, and an eastern facing ventilator shaft. Based on ceramic cross-dating, the phase dates about A.D. 900 to 1100 (Glassow, 1972).

The majority of excavated sites belong to the Ponil Phase, A.D. 1100 to 1250. Taos Incised and/or Punctate ceramics are found in Ponil Phase sites (Glassow, 1972). The first archaeological excavation in the Cimarron District was on a Ponil Phase rockshelter site. Box Canyon Rockshelter (NP 4), located on the North Ponil Canyon, was partially excavated by Samuel Bogan and a group of Scouts in 1941. After receiving some archaeological training at the Peabody Museum, they came to Philmont Scout Ranch to study archaeology. Their excavations in Box Canyon Rockshelter, a two room structure, uncovered a wide variety of perishable materials (Bogan, 1946).

In 1956 Eugene Lutes began the present archaeology program at Philmont Scout Ranch. The program is designed to teach Scouts about professional archaeology through tours of rock art and sites. Scouts can also obtain first hand field experience by participating in supervised excavations. In 1956 and 1957, Lutes and the Scouts began excavations at NP 1, a



Figure 3. Site North Ponil 1 (NP 1) seen from NP 69; (a) Pedregoso Phase, (b) Escritores Phase, (c) Ponil Phase (Slab House).

multi-component site. The first excavations were at the Slab House, a three room Ponil Phase site (Fig. 3c). The Slab House measures 24 by 32 ft. The two small rooms, each about 9 by 12 ft, probably served as storage rooms. The centralized firepit has an adobe collar and a broken metate for a deflector. The burned structure left no carbonized timbers to indicate the actual roof construction. The arrangement of post holes indicates that the roof was supported by four uprights in a square with timbers radiating out to the walls. A hatch cover was found on the roof fill which suggests the house was entered through the roof. Two metates, also found on the roof fill, indicate grinding activities may have taken place on the roof. Taos Black-on-White and Kwahe's Black-on-white were the most common ceramics in the house. Projectile points, drills, knives, incisors, and scrapers were made from basalt, hornfels, chalcedony, quartzite, jasper, and obsidian. Graphite, hematite, turquoise, and malachite were also found (Lutes, 1959).

Lizard Cave (NP 2), another important Ponil Phase site, is located about one-half mile south of site NP 1. The rockshelter measures 45 ft long, 11 ft deep, and 5.5 ft high. Excavations by Skinner (1964) yielded several typical Puebloan features; these were three fire hearths, a low unmortared rock masonry wall, and an irregular row of rocks suggesting a room. An area of rock pavement near the front of the rockshelter probably increased the usable floor space. The artifacts are similar to those found at the Slab House.

The Puebloan occupation of the Cimarron District ends with the Cimarron Phase, A.D. 1200 to 1300. This phase is characterized by Cimarron Plain and Santa Fe Black-on-white

ceramics, the change from small corner-notched to larger side-notched projectile points, and small multi-room surface pueblos with coursed adobe or rock masonry walls. Cimarron Phase sites are generally located on the lower Ponil Creek and along the Cimarron River (Glassow, 1972).

In the summer of 1947, Robert Lister (1948) conducted an archaeological survey in the Watrous Valley. Several sites were found including rockshelters on the SaPello River. Excavations were conducted at the nearby Lyman Site located on the Mora River. The L-shaped pueblo is about 120 by 100 ft. The excavated room, 7 by 8 ft, had coursed adobe walls and three hard packed floors. Lithic artifacts included a metate, manos, and ten projectile points, while five bone awls and two bird bone beads were the only faunal artifacts. The food remains were bison, deer, birds, and only one charred corn cob. The painted ceramics included Santa Fe Black-on-white, Wiyo Black-on-white, Chupadero Black-on-white, and Wingate Black-on-red; Los Lunas Smudged was among the plain wares. Lister collected 111 small points from the site surface. These points are side notched types while the triangular forms are suggestive of blanks or preforms. The points range in size from $3/4$ to $11/2$ inches long. Most of the points are made from quartzite, although flint and obsidian were also used. Two small drills and a full groove maul were first collected on the surface. Based on the ceramics, Lister suggests the pueblo was occupied in Pueblo II and Pueblo III times.

Gunnerson (1959) conducted an archaeological survey in 1957 between Raton and Las Vegas and east to Clayton. Near Sapello and Cimarron, he found sites with a micaceous ware and Tewa style polished red-on-buff ceramics. Lithics were

very common, including the Plains style snub-nosed end scraper. Typical lithic materials were quartzite, obsidian, and flint. Gunnerson suggests these Plains-like artifacts were left by Plains groups on their way to Pecos Pueblo.

In 1947 Herbert Dick (1953) directed salvage excavations at the Hodges site. The site, two shallow rockshelters, is located on Plaza Larga Creek, eight miles southeast of Tucumcari, New Mexico. The deposits of sand and rockfall were disturbed by collectors and erosion. The lithic assemblage included projectile points, side scrapers, a snub-nosed end scraper, flake knives, drills, choppers, hammerstones, manos, and a metate fragment. Quartzite, mottled chert, flint, shale, and obsidian were used to make these tools. Seven bedrock mortars were found between the two rockshelters but no pestles were recovered from the deposits. The faunal remains indicate a wide variety of animals were eaten: bison, prairie dogs, cottontail rabbits, birds, and probably pronghorn antelope. Many of the bones were shattered, probably with a chopper. Fresh water mussels, *Uniomereus tetralasmus*, were found throughout the deposits. Dick recovered several varieties of Plain Brown ceramics. He suggests the rockshelters were occupied in the late 1300s or early 1400s.

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