

DOLORS ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROGRAM
HISTORIC RESEARCH DESIGN

DAP 54

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INTRODUCTION

The Dolores Archaeological Program Historic Research Design serves to structure fieldwork, analysis and other studies necessary to reconstruct the historic occupation and settlement of the Dolores River Valley. One segment of historic studies will focus on the settlers who "took up" land in the valley under the provisions established by the Homestead Act of 1862; this part of the program has been designated Problem Domain 1. Other studies will focus on the establishment, lifespan and decline of the townsite of McPhee, headquarters of the new Mexico Lumber Company from 1923 to 1948; this part has been designated Problem Domain 2.

The reasons for concentrating historic research on homesteading and the McPhee townsite are as follows: first, due to the availability of land patents, assay records, company records and other lines of evidence, the Homestead Era (ca. 1880-1950) and the town of McPhee are well documented. Second, a large majority of the sites already surveyed and recorded can be classified as relating either to the Homestead Era or to McPhee. Finally, there has been very little systematic work done in Historic Archaeology in Colorado. The investigations that have been accomplished in the recent past have concentrated on local mining operations, or towns on the east slope of the Rocky Mountains. The results of the program enumerated in the research design will make a significant contribution to understanding of the history of and historical processes in southwestern Colorado. It is also intended that the program will make a significant contribution to local heritage; this will be in the form of a colorful summary that will be available to the local populace. In summary, by evaluating the historic resources available for study in the project area, it has been concluded that homesteading and the town of McPhee are those with the most potential for systematic research and contributions to local heritage.

Before AD 1300, the Dolores Project Area was occupied by several prehistoric Indian cultures including Archaic peoples and the Anasazi. The prehistoric research design of the D.A.P. outlines program studies of these cultures. After the dispersal of the Anasazi culture, the area around the Dolores River appears not to have been intensively settled or used by humans until the first land patents were issued in 1882 to Charles Johnson and F.H. Morgan (although groups of roving protohistoric Indians probably inhabited this area). During this hiatus of several hundred years, the only historic accounts available cite those of wanderings of Spanish missionaries and explorers, migratory native American groups and American pioneers on their way further west.

The geographic area of study for the historic program is the same as that described for the prehistoric studies of the D.A.P. The core area of study will be the Dolores River valley from the present town of Dolores downstream to the vicinity of the McPhee damsite. The area surrounding

this defined core will also be examined, primarily to gain a regional perspective and for comparative purposes. For example, the summer ranges used by the Dolores valley ranches and the lumber camps and railroad spurs of McPhee are located at some distance from the Dolores valley, however, to obtain a complete understanding these peripheral areas must be studied as well. This larger region includes Montezuma and Dolores Counties, as well as the towns of Mancos, Cortez and Rico.

The collection of data sources for a comprehensive investigatory program will be accomplished by library research and field work. Actual operations will consist of five steps:

1. survey and intensive recording of historic sites
2. archival search and informant interviews
3. excavations
4. analysis
5. synthesis

This research program will result in a description of the people, their material culture and a history of the area. The techniques to be used in the steps outlined above will conform to selected methods previously established in the disciplines of archaeology, ethnohistory, ethnoarchaeology, and historic architecture.

Step 1, the survey and intensive recording of historic sites will be used to fashion a historic site typology for the project area. The historic site types evident from the work undertaken thus far are: occupation sites (ranches, farms, houses townsites and trailers), construction sites (camps, storage sheds, bridges, tunnels and canals) and disposal sites (dumps and cemeteries).

Step 2 will entail the compilation of documented data. The data will be assembled by a search for pertinent literature using public, private and religious sources, and the recording of oral traditions. This collection of data will be implemented using research procedures formulated in ethnoarchaeology by Adams (1977), in historical architecture by Crosby (1977) and Linderer (1977), and in ethnohistory by Vasina (1965) and Glassie (1971, 1976).

Step 3, intensive site excavations, will include the employment of archaeological techniques established by Heizer and Graham (1967) and South (1977). Intensive excavations will result in the assemblage of an augmented data base which includes artifacts, features, structural remains

and their proveniences and associations. Excavation is needed to obtain access to material presently preserved below ground surface. To rely solely on surface collections is insufficient because some features and artifacts formerly present on the surface have been moved or destroyed. A truer perspective can be gained by subsurface investigations.

Steps 4 and 5, the analysis of the data and synthesis, will result in a comprehensive and concise account of the work completed, description and analysis of the data collected, and interpretations and conclusions based on this analysis. The synthesis will also provide a popular account of the settlement and occupation of the Dolores River valley in the historic period of southwestern Colorado.

PROBLEM DOMAINS

Problem Domain 1: The Homestead Era (Ca. 1880-1950)

The Homestead Era began in the United States with the passage of the Homestead Act of May 20, 1862. "This act, also known as the 160 Acre Homestead Act and Johnson Homestead Act, authorizes the head of a family, or other person with specified qualifications, to enter public lands, limited to a total of 160 acres." (United States Government Printing Office 1968:66).

Although most of the western lands affected by this act were allocated shortly after its passage, it wasn't until 1880 that government lands in southwestern Colorado were opened for settlement. Homesteading in southwestern Colorado was implemented by the June 15, 1880, Act entitled, "Inclusion of Lands of Ute Indians in Colorado," which established the Ute reservations and officially opened to the public all other land previously owned by the Ute Tribe.

Settlers began to arrive in the Mancos Valley in 1877. By 1880 a post office was established at Crumbley Ranch, two miles above the town of Dolores. The town of Big Bend, or the first Dolores, was in existence by 1882 (Freeman 1958).

The questions posed as internal divisions of Problem Domain 1, when answered, may add to our knowledge of when, how and why this area of Colorado was settled during the historic time period. These questions are:

QUESTION 1: WHAT WAS THE HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENT AND HOW WAS IT EXPLOITED BY THE INHABITANTS?

QUESTION 2: WHAT WERE THE INTER- AND INTRA-SITE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS?

QUESTION 3: WHAT IS THE DEMOGRAPHY OF THE HISTORIC POPULATION (E.G., BIRTH RATE, MORTALITY RATE, POPULATION DENSITY, ETC.)?

QUESTION 4: WHAT TECHNOLOGY AND ARCHITECTURE WERE EMPLOYED, AND HOW DO THEY COMPARE WITH OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY?

QUESTION 5: WHAT ECONOMIC SYSTEMS WERE EMPLOYED?

QUESTION 6: WHAT WERE THE SOCIAL PATTERNS?

QUESTION 7: WHAT CULTURAL PROCESSES TOOK PLACE?

Question 1: What was the historical environment and how was it exploited by the inhabitants? Research designed to answer this question will establish the available resources of the study area and the patterns of their exploitation. Mechanisms of human disturbance have always affected the environment. In his interaction with his natural surroundings, the homestead pioneer utilizing the resource base altered the environment. The environmental consequences of early homesteading activities will be investigated as part of Question 1. Research as part of Question 1 will be organized according to the following inquiries:

- a. What was the environment and resource base in 1880?
- b. How did the homesteaders utilize this resource base?
- c. What is the record of weather fluctuations and their effect on the environment and the inhabitants?
- d. What native and animal species were exploited by the settlers? How were the native populations affected by the exploitation?
- e. What species of plants and animals were introduced by the pioneers? What effect did this have on the environment?

Question 2: What were the inter- and intrasite settlement patterns? Most of the land in the project area was originally purchased under the guidelines set forth by the Homestead Act. It is hypothesized that the homestead settlement patterns should reflect this arbitrary control over land sale established by the government. The terrain and resources of the area may also be a factor influencing how the land was developed and used. Research as part of Question 2 will be organized according to the following inquiries:

- a. What was the distribution of habitations and other historic sites during the Homesteading Period?
- b. Can this pattern be partially explained by the parameters established in the Homestead Act?
- c. How did the terrain and land form affect where the homesteads were established?

Question 3: What is the demography of the historic population (e.g., birth rate, mortality rate, population density, etc.)? The characteristics of the homesteading population will be established. This description will include vital statistics and local densities and an attempt will be made to establish trends. The statistics will be collected from government censuses and state, county, city and church records. Research as part of Question 3 will be organized according to the following inquiries:

- a. What was the population density?
- b. Were there any local fluctuations in population? Were these fluctuations affected by internal or external factors?
- c. Given: migration is the movement of a population (or segment

thereof) from one locality to another. Where did the pioneers who settled in the study area originate? What was the attraction? What factors kept them here? How long did they stay? Why did some of them leave, and where did they go?

d. What are the vital statistics of the population during the homesteading era? What was the life span and death rate? How much of a factor was infant mortality in determining population growth rates?

Question 4: What technology and architecture were employed, and how do they compare with other areas of the country? The technological knowledge possessed by the settlers enabled them to adjust to their new surroundings. The technological knowledge possessed by the settlers upon their arrival, and how this was applied, will be investigated.

One aspect of technology is architecture - how artificial shelter is used to insulate one from his environment. Amos Rappoport (1969) has demonstrated that house form is related to the culture of the builder. Hypothetically, architectural styles can be used to infer ethnic origins. A study of architectural styles may reveal some clues as to where the homesteaders lived before they came to this area. Subquestions under Question 4 are as follows:

- a. What forms of mechanization were at the disposal of the first homesteaders in the 1880's?
- b. How did technological advances made outside this community affect production?
- c. What architectural styles are present in the study area?
- d. Can architectural styles be used to infer ethnic origins?

Question 5: What economic systems were employed? Economy is defined as the production, distribution and consumption of resources by a group of people. How these resources are procured and processed, and the amount of resources used, depends on the technology applied by the culture. Trade networks that operated at different levels from home to community to nation existed within this economic framework. The trade network reflects the consumption pattern of the individual and the community. This pattern should be evident in the material classifications of the artifacts uncovered by archaeological investigations. Specific inquiries as part of Question 5 are as follows:

- a. What interaction spheres are evident in the material culture and architectural styles recovered from the individual homesteads?
- b. What were the major means of production (or subsistence) of the homesteads?
- c. Were the major modes supplemented by other means of production (e.g., was ranching supplemented by mining, fur trading or hunting)?

Question 6: What were the social patterns? Available evidence supports the hypothesis that the homesteaders came from different parts of North America and Europe. This "melting pot" of different social, political and religious beliefs probably incorporated many different ideals. The resultant social organization was reflected in the material makeup of the community. Question-6-specific inquiries are as follows:

- a. How was the homestead community organized? What social groups were evident within the community?
- b. How did the different ethnic beliefs affect this organization?
- c. What were the interaction spheres among the community members?
- d. What were the political beliefs of the community?
- e. What was the amount of participation in local and state government by the homesteaders?

Question 7: What cultural processes took place? Within the time frame established for the homesteading era, changes in technology, economy, laws, environment, architecture and social order occurred. This question is involved with interpretation and inference based on the analysis and background work done to investigate the previous questions subsumed in the homesteading problem domain. The specific questions stated below outline the format this synthesis will follow. The synthesis will adhere to a processual framework and culture change will be a central concern.

- a. Did the effects of homesteading on the environment change through time?
- b. What technological advances occurred that improved the lifestyle and subsistence methods of the settlers?
- c. How did changes in the land laws affect the buying and selling of land in the area, and thereby the local settlement patterns?
- d. What social changes occurred, if any, during this period (i.e., what was the development of the social organization of the community)?

Problem Domain 2: The Townsite of McPhee (1924-1948)

In 1923, the New Mexico Lumber Company began to close its operations at El Vado, New Mexico because all suitable timber stands in the area had been exhausted. Its parent company, McPhee and McGinnity, began to scout around for harvestable timber stands in the Southwest. When the U.S. Forest Service advertised a timber sale of 118,391 acres in southwestern Colorado, the McPhee and McGinnity Company purchased the timber rights and began to move their lumber operations to an area north of the present town of Dolores, Colorado. The land chosen for the McPhee townsite was the original homestead of Charles Johnson. Building began early in 1924 and by autumn the sawmill was in operation.

At the time of purchase it was estimated that the timber stands in the area would be depleted in 20 years. This prediction proved accurate because by the 1940s, McPhee was in a serious decline and on March 23, 1948 the town property was sold.

Between 1924 and 1948, McPhee was one of the largest towns in the area. However, during this period, the company town faced many setbacks, including fires, layoffs and bankruptcy.

McPhee's life spanned a period of technological transition. Horse-drawn wagons were used in the beginning but by the 1940s, the lumber company was using mechanized vehicles to haul its lumber. The study of the New Mexico Lumber Company and McPhee will further understanding of the evolution of timber-cutting operations in the southwestern United States. Little is known archeologically of the techniques used and the organization of these companies.

McPhee existed as a microcosm of the mid-twentieth-century United States. Events taking place in the rest of the nation had considerable impact on the residents of McPhee. The effects are reflected in the material culture, economy and social organization of the McPhee community. By studying the history of the town and its inhabitants, insight may be gained into the industrial period in the southwestern United States.

The questions posed in this problem domain are as follows:

QUESTION 1: WHAT WERE THE EFFECTS OF MCPHEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT?

QUESTION 2: WHAT CHANGES TOOK PLACE IN LOGGING TECHNOLOGY DURING MCPHEE'S EXISTENCE?

QUESTION 3: WHAT ECONOMIC SYSTEMS WERE EMPLOYED?

QUESTION 4: WHAT WAS THE DEMOGRAPHY OF MCPHEE AND SURROUNDING AREAS?

QUESTION 5: WHAT WERE THE SOCIAL PATTERNS?

Question 1: What were the effects of McPhee on the environment? By the very nature of their existence, lumbering operations destroy several thousands of acres of timber. Other operations (i.e., hauling, processing, etc.) also affected the environment of the area. Research as a part of Question 1 will be organized according to the following specific inquiries:

- a. What timber species were harvested?
- b. How did this cutting affect the species of animals and plants in the area?
- c. Do the effects of these modifications continue today?

Question 2: What changes took place in logging technology during McPhee's existence? Technological advances in the logging industry during the years of McPhee's existence affected local techniques. An example is the replacement of horse-drawn conveyances with the use of railroad spurs to transport the cut timber from the logging areas to the sawmill. Specific inquiries as part of Question 2 are as follows:

- a. In 1920, what methods were used to cut and transport timber?
- b. How did changes in lumbering technology affect operations at McPhee?
- c. What techniques used at McPhee were adopted from ones used in the late 1800s and early 1900s in other areas of the country?
- d. How did the narrow gauge railway collection system function, and what was its effect on general timbering operations?

Question 3: What economic systems were employed? The McPhee sawmill produced a product that was in demand and had to be distributed to its buyers. The local and regional economic trends affected the New Mexico Lumber Company as well; the historic record reveals that the owners were in financial straits at several points in time. Specific areas of research for Question 3 are:

- a. What products were produced at McPhee?
- b. What was the market for these products?
- c. What was the internal economic framework of the New Mexico Lumber Company?
- d. What exchange networks were established within McPhee and outside the area?
- e. What effects did economic events of outside areas have on the company?

Question 4: What was the demography of McPhee and surrounding areas? The results of a demographic study of McPhee might parallel the rise and fall of the financial status of the company. Hypothetically, there should be more people employed during the "good times" than during economic difficulties. Specific questions to be addressed under Question 4 are:

- a. How did the population of McPhee fluctuate from 1924 to 1948?
- b. Do these fluctuations reflect the economic status of the company?
- c. What were the physical characteristics and vital statistics of the town population? What was the state of health? What sub-populations were present?

Question 5: What were the social patterns? From a variety of sources (informants, newspapers and personal records), it is known that McPhee was spatially divided into neighborhoods based on ethnic association and company status. This social division may be proven in the archaeological record. It may also be reflected by architectural styles of the houses. This composite of people may have determined the social organization of this community. The establishment of a school and church demonstrates community effort on one scale; however, much of this social grouping could have been predisposed. McPhee was a "company town" with even the commissary controlled by the lumber company officials. Research as part of Question 5 will be organized according to the following inquiries:

- a. Does the layout of the town confirm or deny the supposition that ethnic neighborhoods existed?
- b. What influence did the church and school have on the community?
- c. What influence did the New Mexico Lumber Company have on the lifestyle of its employees?
- d. What was the relationship of the people of McPhee to the inhabitants of the surrounding area?
- e. What were the internal relationships among the workers of McPhee?
- f. Is there a distinction in house types in McPhee? Is this distinction based on company hierarchy, ethnic affiliation or both?

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