

1 - Pit Houses

Simonton Ranch Archaeological Investigation



2006 Archaeological Investigation

In 2006 EnviroSystems Management, Inc. conducted limited archaeological data recovery excavations at sites on Simonton Ranch, northwest of Camp Verde. The study was conducted after consultation with the Yavapai-Apache Nation, Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, Hualapai Tribe and the Hopi Tribe, all of whom claim historical connections to this area. Two village sites were discovered.



This pathway, north of Homestead Parkway, had extensive prehistoric artifact scatter and a pit house village of at least ten structures. Most structures appear to date from A.D. 1050 to 1150.

Radiocarbon dates from one structure indicated an earlier habitation dating to between A.D. 540 and 765. This site was recorded and reported to the Arizona State Museum.

The Verde Valley Archaeology Center continues to study the artifacts and structures of this site to provide a better picture of life during this time period.

The Pit House at this Location



The area before you was the only pit house excavated. It was described as square to rectangular with rounded corners and measured 24 ft x 23 ft (7.3 m x 7 m) with a depth from 13.8 inches (35 cm) below the modern ground surface to 35.4 inches (90 cm). The walls and floor were unplastered. A hearth, south of the house center, consisted of three boulders set an equal distance from each other around a shallow depression in the floor filled with ash and charcoal. There was no visible entryway.

Pit House Living

This model of a 12th-century Sinagua pit house was digitally created by C. Downum, V. Leshyk, D. Boone, and R. Belnap from the original Museum of Northern Arizona model created by V. Huber in the 1930s.



There is considerable variation found in pit house size, configuration and construction. While some pit structures were primarily used for habitation, some were probably used for storage or in food processing and storage. Others may have been communal or "public" structures.

Archaeological Site Etiquette

All archaeological sites not only provide the opportunity to learn but they have traditional significance to descendants of American Indians whose ancestors made the Verde Valley their home for thousands of years.

If you observe someone actively defacing or destroying any archaeological site in the Verde Valley, do not confront them but call 911. If you wish to report graffiti or damage to a site that appears new, you can contact Verde Valley Site Watch, a service of the Verde Valley Archaeology Center in cooperation with the Arizona Site Steward Program, via email to sitewatch@vvarchcenter.org or call the Center at 928-567-0066. If you would like to learn more about the Arizona Site Steward Program, visit their website at www.azsite stewardprogram.com.

South of Homestead Parkway

Another site, south of Homestead Parkway, north of Woods Ditch, also proved to be a pit house village with extensive prehistoric artifact scatter. That site appeared to date a little earlier at about A.D. 1000 to 1050. A radiocarbon date from a roasting pit ranged from A.D. 950 to 1040.

The location of this pit house village property was sold to Arizona State Parks to be part of the riverfront park.



This exhibit is sponsored by Mary Byrd in memory of Harris Byrd.