

Total Archaeological Project Field School

Tommy Site, LA 126581 Excavation Notes Updated August 31, 1999

Previous Work

Mr. Tommy Bolack, owner and operator of the B-Square Ranch located in Farmington, New Mexico (Figure 1), discovered site LA 126581, the Tommy Site (Figure 2), in late 1987 during construction of catch-basins for control of run-off. Mr. Bolack conducted excavations at the site at that time. The entire site was overlain with from 5-9 ft of sterile colluvial overburden. Four trenches were placed in the site at that time, and revealed a Pueblo I habitation overlain by a Pueblo II occupation which appears to have extended into the early Pueblo III time period. Flooding had removed the upper portions of kivas and trash mounds which were subsequently overlain by colluvially deposited sterile sand and clay.

Trench 1 was placed in what now appears to be the middle of the site and revealed a large midden, Midden A. Trench 2 was placed at right angle to Trench 1 at the eastern end of the trench and Trench 3 was placed at right angle to Trench 1 at its western end. Trench 4 was placed some distance to the west to see if the site continued and few cultural materials were found there.

Mr. Bolack's 1987-1988 excavations revealed a minimum of eight pit structures, four or more room blocks, and four trash mounds. The portions of the site which were excavated at that time were completely removed and the trenches were backfilled. Other than some preliminary preparation for a subsequent 1989 attempt at a field school which never took place, no work has been conducted at the site since that time.

Research Design

Mr. Bolack contacted San Juan College in 1998 to initiate a jointly funded project focused on providing an archeological field school opportunity through San Juan College Cultural Resources Management Program (SJC-CRMP) utilizing site LA 126581. As stated in the Research Design (SJC-CRMP 1999), the goals of the Total Archaeological Project are to gather both excavation and survey data about the Anasazi culture in the Total area. Research interests include investigation into whether the middle San Juan River valley may have functioned as a major regional center prior to and during the collapse of Chacoan influence; the possible presence of prehistoric roads junctioning with the Sterling Site, Point Site, or Mine Canyon Site; methods of water control in the alluvial/colluvial environment found at the base of the Shannon Bluffs; the level of Chacoan influence on middle San Juan

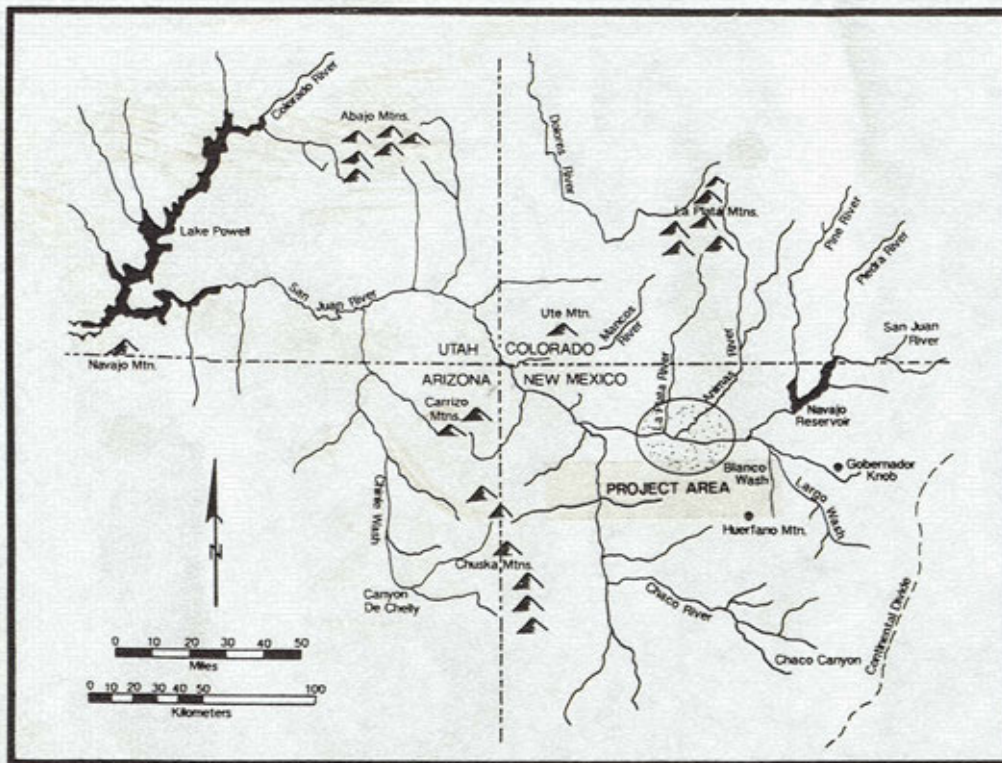
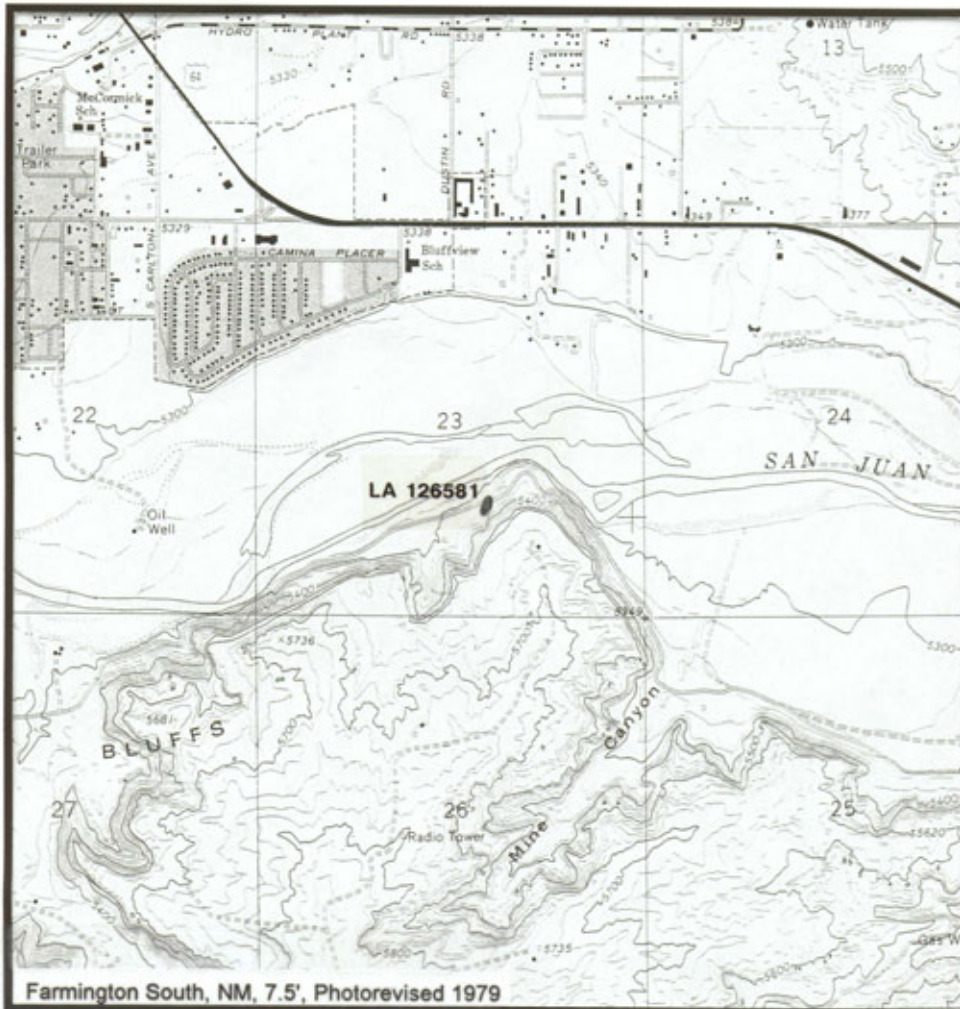


Figure 1. General Location Map



Site LA 126581
Section 23, T29N, R13W, N.M.P.M.

San Juan County, New Mexico

TN

Site Vicinity Map.

River valley sites; the relationship between Chacoan outliers and nearby small sites; community structure in the middle San Juan River valley; and trading relationships with other nearby Anasazi populations.

Site Preparation

Site Map and Datum

In the spring of 1999, the known surface of the Tommy Site was mapped with Brunton compass and 60 m tape. A permanent site datum was established near the southern boundary of the site. The numerous features excavated (and removed) by Mr. Bolack are shown on the site map (Figure 3).

Trenches 1 and 2

In June of 1999, a Caterpillar D-6 bulldozer operated under the direction of Tommy Bolack was used to re-establish Trenches 1 and 2. The backfill in the eastern portion of Trench 1 was removed to approximately 3.5 m below present ground surface. The backfill in Trench 2 was removed to a depth of approximately 6 m below the present ground surface in the area of the known (and partially removed) Kiva G (see Figure 3). Backfill from Trench 2 was removed to a somewhat shallower depth all the way north to the bank of the San Juan River in order to provide drainage while the site was open for the field school.

Block Excavation Area (see Figure 3)

Using a rubber-tired front-end loader, approximately 2 m of sterile colluvial overburden was removed from an approximate 15 x 20 m area in the undisturbed portion of the site. In-situ cultural material which had been previously designated Midden A was revealed just below the excavated surface in the southern portion of the excavation block. Several 30-50 cm deep test holes placed within the northern portion of the excavation block revealed no cultural material to that depth.

From a secondary datum, subdatum A, set from the main site datum, a north-south baseline was established in the excavation block using an alidade. The grid coordinates 140N/100E and 150N/100E were staked.

Trenches 1 and 2

North Profile of Trench 1

The profile revealed Midden A and the top of the pitstructure which had been previously designated Kiva G, now identified as Structure 1. The midden extended from the western edge of the exposed portion of Trench 1 to within approximately 1.5 m of the eastern edge of the trench. It measured approximately 1-2 m in thickness with some minor stratigraphy within the well defined entire midden stratum. Soil deposits dipped dramatically downward near the bottom of the eastern end of the trench and a few chunks of yellow sandstone rocks mark this dip. This sandstone represented the upper wall portion above the bench of Structure 1.

West Profile of Trench 2

The profile revealed Structure 1 down to floor, a small bit of heavily oxidized soil representing a remnant of an oxidized bell-shaped storage pit (from a later occupation), and a few chunks of yellow sandstone adjacent to a large upright cobble surrounded by oxidized soil. Structure 1 was unburned and the fill appeared relatively clean of artifacts and charcoal. The pitstructure appeared to have been cleaned out before abandonment. Backfill from Trench 2 was removed to in-situ deposits only near Structure 1. The remaining profile of reopened Trench 2 showed only backfill from the previous excavation at the site.

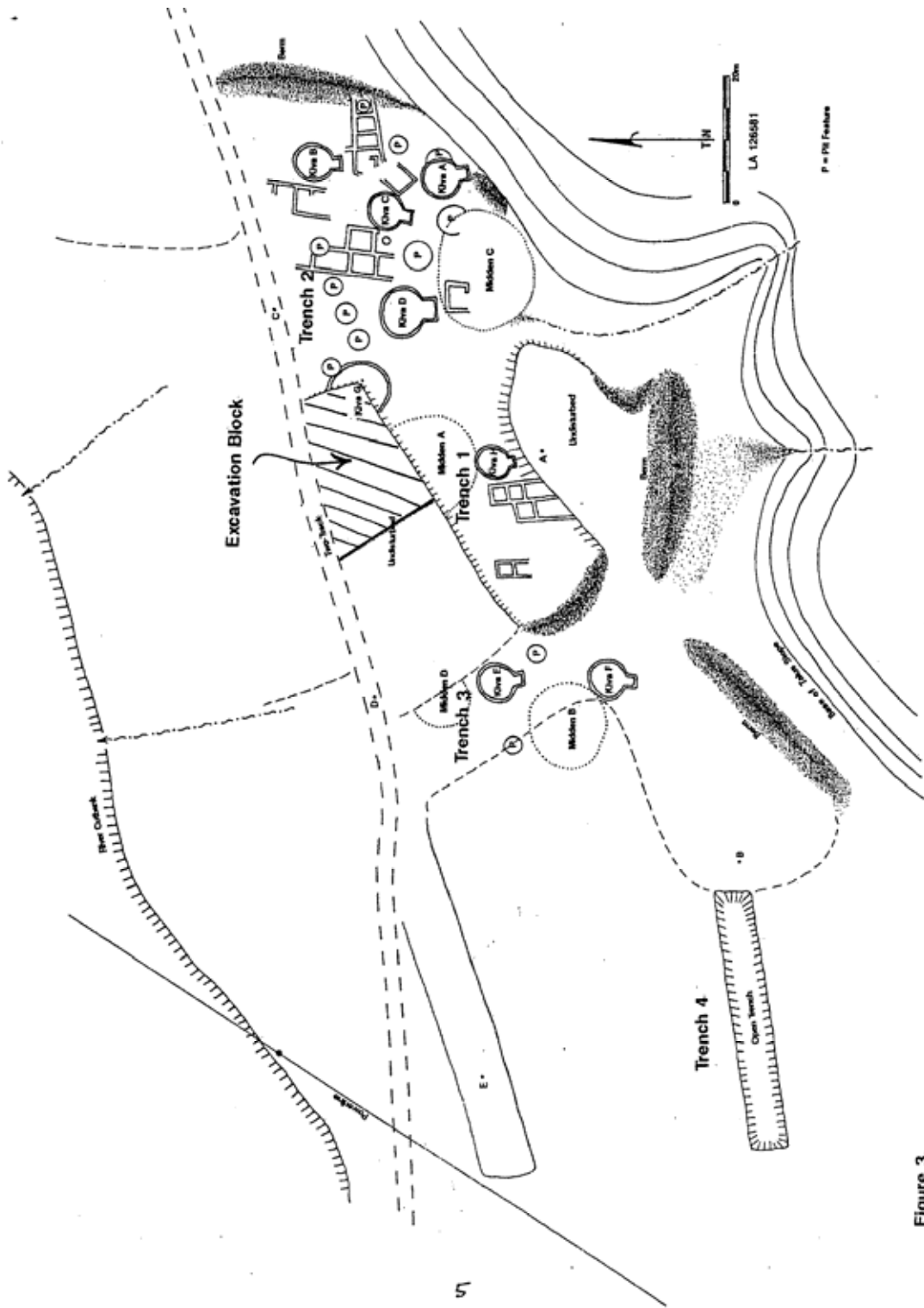


Figure 3.

Field School Excavation Teams (June 14 to July 23, 1999)

Student Equipment Assignment

Each of the five two-person crews was assigned a color-coded excavation crate containing trowel, measuring tape, line level, dustpan, brush, clipboard holding plastic-covered coding form, and baggie containing Sharpies, rubber bands, and artifact provenience tags. The students had previously been provided with complete provenience system information. Forms were kept in a filebox, available for all to use. The daily log for cataloging all artifacts turned in to the lab was also in the filebox.

Student Profiling Procedures at Trench 1

The northern wall of Trench 1 was approximately 2 m high. The trench wall extended for a length of approximately 15 m southwestward from the corner at the junction of Trenches 1 and 2. This 15 m long by 2 m high portion of southeast-facing trench wall was cleaned with shovels and trowels.

A chaining pin was hammered into the trench wall at the western end of the area to be profiled. Placement of the pin was dependant on the desire for a single line to extend across the entire profile. In this instance the chaining pin was placed rather low on the wall at the western end of the trench.

Yellow nylon string was attached to the chaining pin. A line level was attached to the center of the string which was then pulled tautly out to a 3-4 m length. A student monitors when the bubble is level, the spot marked and another chaining pin hammered in the trench wall. The string was wrapped tightly around the chaining pin and pulled tightly out another 3-4 m, then leveled again with the line level. This procedure continued to the eastern end of the trench.

From a datum established above the trench wall, an elevation was established for the level line (the nylon string). A metric measuring tape was placed along the profile through the chaining pins. Then, the 15 m long trench wall area was partitioned into five 3 m sections and each excavation crew was assigned a section to draw.

Using map paper scaled 1 cm = 20 cm, students were shown how to draw the profile by measuring distances either above or below the level line. The top and bottom of the trench were drawn as well as the midden stratum and separate pitfill stratum defining Structure 1. The composite profile is shown in Figure 4. Artifacts showing in profile were point located with PD #, PL #, and elevation. The artifacts were bagged and logged in on the forms.

Student Site Gridding Procedures

After explanation of triangulation for use in creating equal sided squares, several grid coordinates were staked from the previously established 140N/100E and 150N/100E stakes. Then, all the corners of five 2 x 2 m excavation units were established.

Student Excavation Procedures

Each excavation crew was assigned a 2 x 2 m unit presumed to be located above the midden as defined in the Trench 1 profile. Tripod 1/4 inch screens, wheelbarrows, and shovels were provided for excavation. Work continued on these grid units as well as several additional whole and partial units throughout the field school session (Figure 5).

Because of the uneven surface of the excavation block, the first levels of each grid unit were removed to 10 cm below the lowest grid corner. Students were shown how to use the line level to excavate in 10 cm levels, measuring a distance below the elevation

datum and checking each of the grid corners to make sure they are all at the same elevation. Some of the grid units produced very thick Level 1s because of the uneven surface noted above. Troweling and shoveling techniques were demonstrated to the students.

Midden (Study Unit 50-1)

Overview

In general, excavation of units into the midden revealed that portions were truncated by natural erosional washes or gullies. Some areas of the midden contained more naturally deposited layers of sand and gravel than others. Large quantities of artifacts were recovered in some of the units, while others contained fewer artifacts. The northern boundary of the midden is still unknown.

Initially, dipping strata, indicative of another pitstructure were revealed clearly in the east wall of grid unit 142N/102E. However, the dipping leveled out and the presence of another pitstructure to the north became less likely.

Midden Artifacts

Ceramics revealed early Pueblo II through early Pueblo III types. Numerous Pueblo II design elements such as interlocking spirals, checkerboard, and triangles were present. Corrugated sherds dominated the utility wares, with the jar rims ranging from straight to highly everted. Redwares were present but rare. One Red on White/Gray sherd and a Tsegi Polychrome sherd were observed. A random sample of about 20 sherds were examined for temper type. The small sample indicated the assemblage contains between 20 and 30 percent trachyte-tempered Chuska Tradition vessels.

Lithics are generally quite crude although the local cobbles contain a great deal of chert and there seems to be a rather high quantity of this fine-grained silicified material in the lithic assemblage. Materials include large quantities of quartzite, chert, and silicified wood as well as basalt and other igneous materials. Only three pieces of obsidian were collected. A total of seventeen projectile points were recovered. Most are small side-notched points made of yellow-brown chert or silicified wood. Hammerstones were abundant, followed by cores, choppers, and axes. A few large bifaces, possible knives, were also recovered.

Groundstone was sparse in the midden, with most pieces identified as small slabs showing evidence of grinding as well as some broken mano fragments. Three large pieces of two broken trough metates lined a portion of the Feature 1 roasting pit (discussed below). These were the only large pieces of metate which were recovered.

Bone was plentiful in the midden with a cursory examination indicating deer, dog, rabbit, turkey, and possibly fish represented. Sheep bone may also be included but those have not yet been specifically identified. Bone tools included awls, needles, bone beads, and a bone gaming piece.

Other exotics included pendants of ceramic and stone. Pendant stones included jet, turquoise, and a red/pink shale. One of the ceramic pendants was formed with clay and fired. Another consisted of a ceramic piece of a redware bowl which was ground to shape.

Macrobotanical Remains

Numerous small burned cobs of corn measuring only about a centimeter in diameter were present. At least one larger cob was observed which measured about two

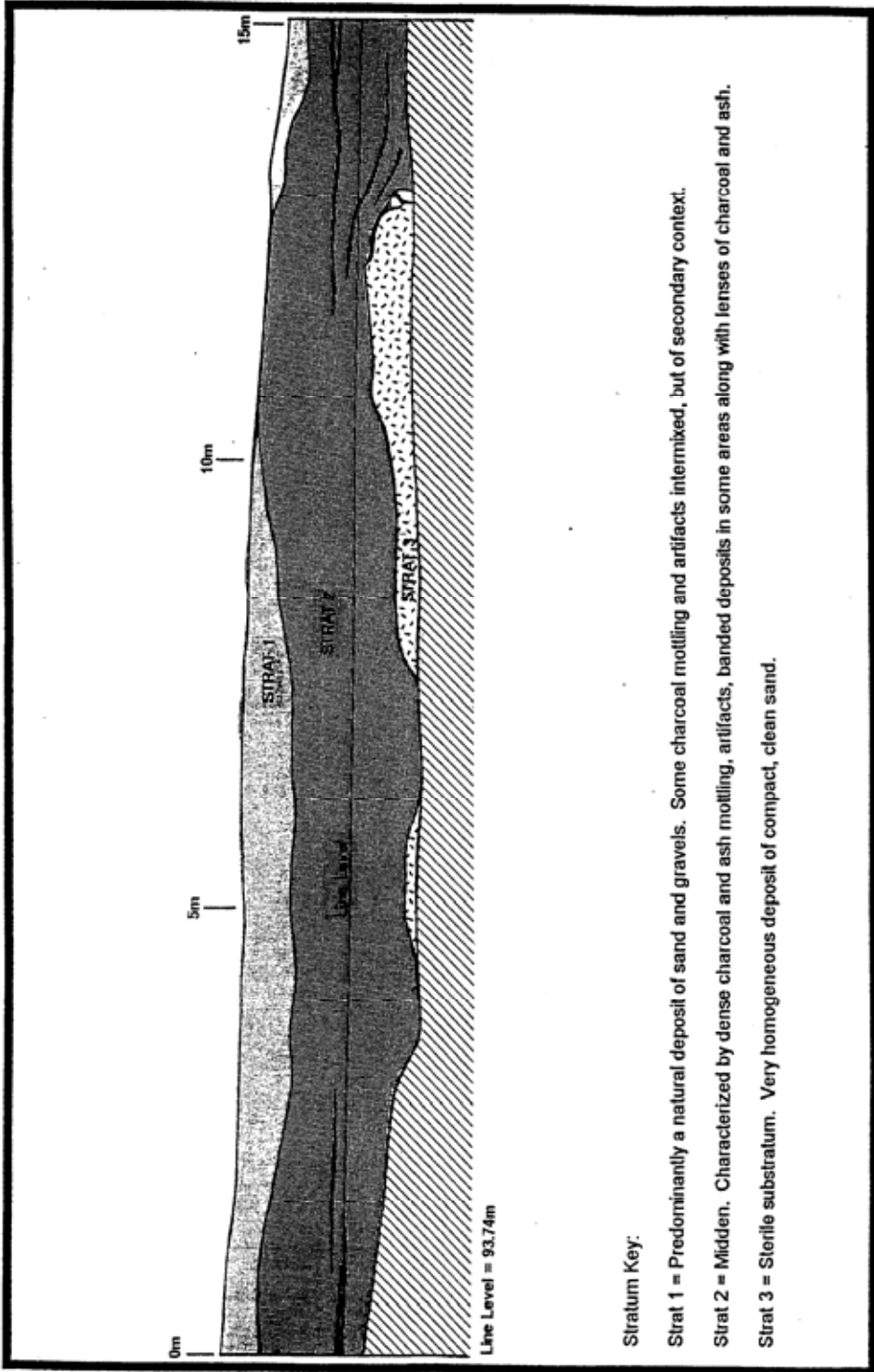
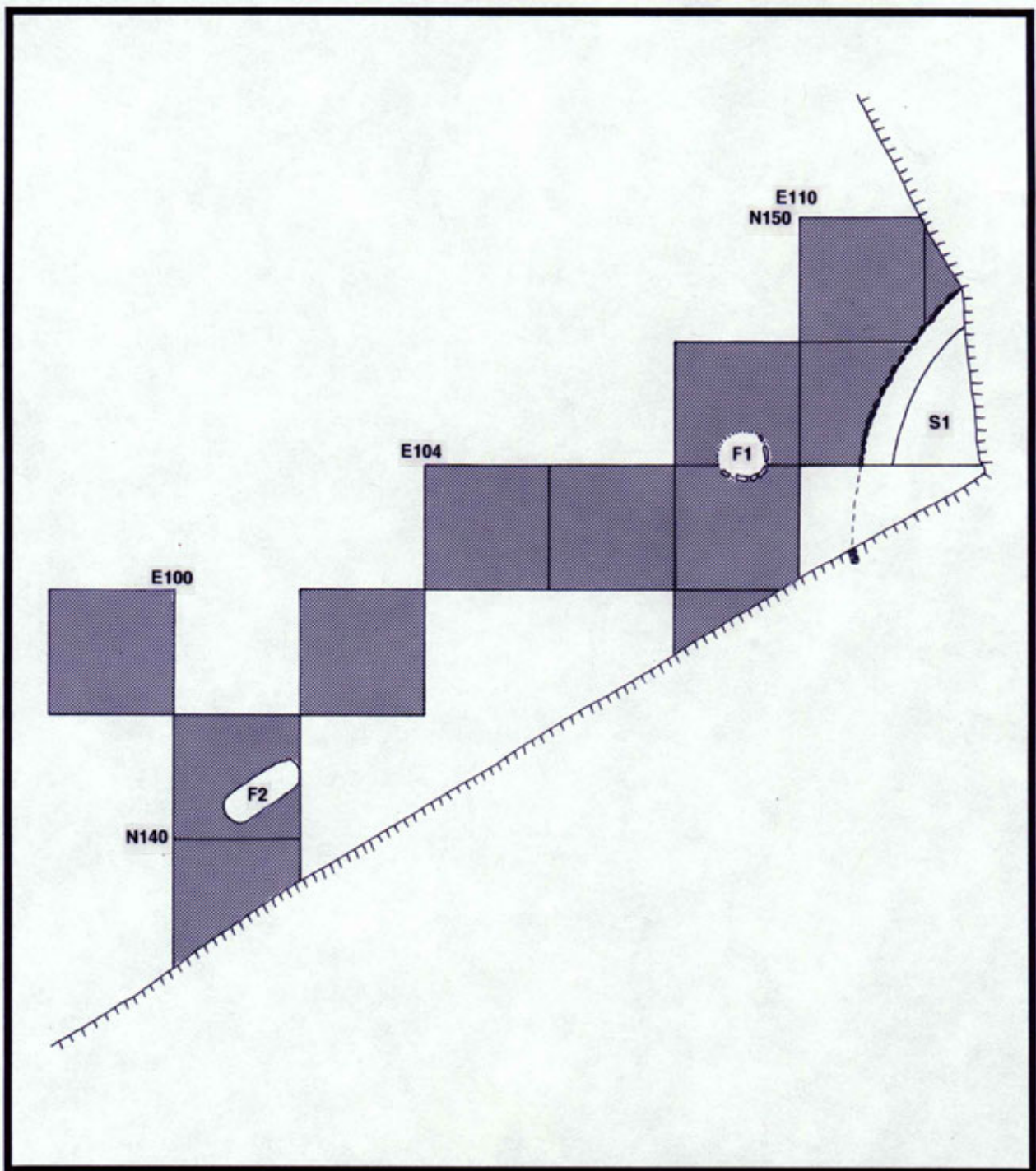



Figure 4.



Site LA 126581



Key to Symbols

- S# = Structure No.
- F# = Feature No.
-  = Excavation Unit

centimeters in diameter.

Roasting Pit (Feature 1)

The southern portion of a rock-lined roasting pit was discovered at approximately 1.0 m deep in the northern portion of grid unit 144N/108E. The pit was lined with large cobbles and three large pieces of two intensively-used trough metates which had been set upright on edge (Figure 6). Oxidized soil surrounded the rocks which lined the pit. The roasting pit was at a level that indicates it may have been associated with the pitstructure occupation. It was near the base of the midden although several middeny charcoal lenses were observed continuing to about 10-20 cm below the pit. Yellow, apparently sterile sand, was observed beneath those charcoal lenses.

Human Burial 1 (Feature 2)

A human burial was discovered in grid unit 140N/100E early on the morning of July 1, 1999. The partial olla discussed below was observed initially, then the outline of the whole bowl was observed along with a patch of bone which was the right cheekbone of the individual.

Procedures guided by the New Mexico Cultural Properties Act were instituted immediately upon discovery of the unmarked human burial. Three entities were contacted by telephone including the local Medical Examiner/Investigator (ME), the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office (NMSHPO), and the landowner, Tommy Bolack. When notified of the situation, the local ME rejected jurisdiction, meaning he would not need to see the skeletal material. The State Historic Preservation Office requested a fax of the pertinent locational and cultural information. At that point, SJC-CRMP=s New Mexico burial permit (No. ABE-338) was instated. Mr. Bolack visited the site during removal of the burial.

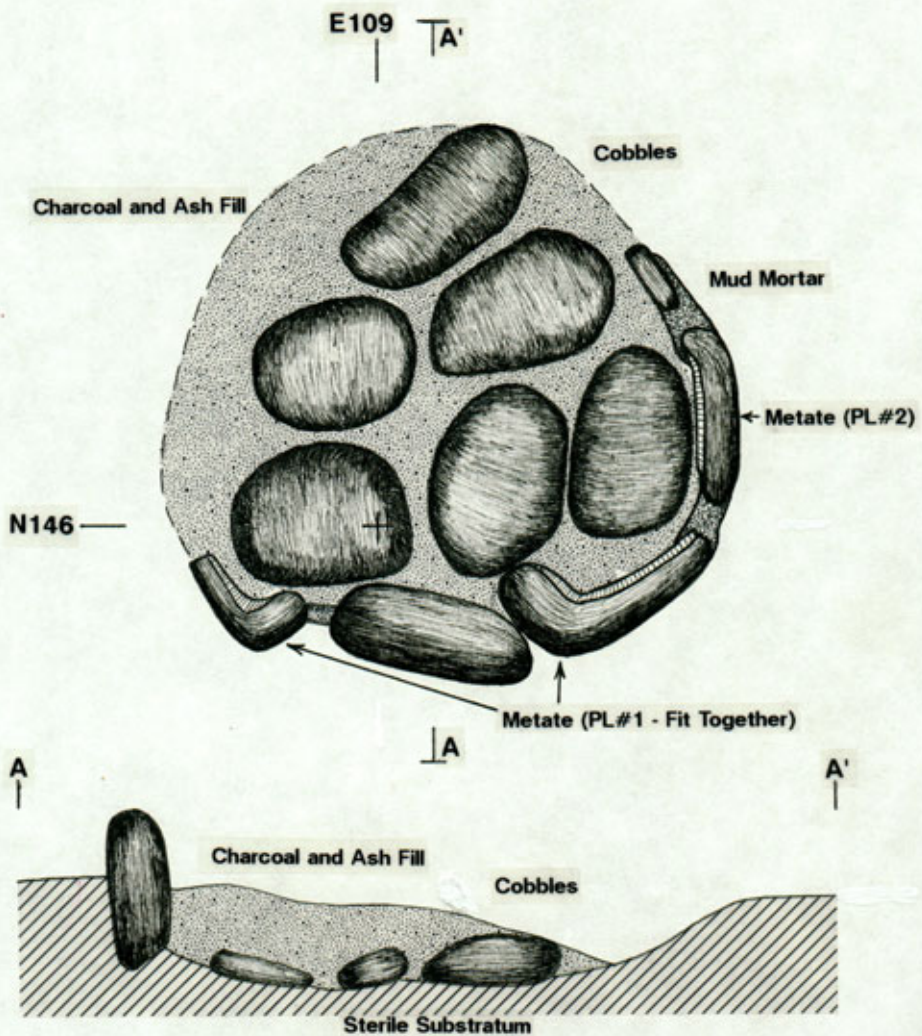
Troweling and brushing to clean the burial area revealed the pit outline. A plan view of the burial pit was drawn. Excavation began with trowels, removing the pit fill around the body and associated grave goods. The two excavators utilized bamboo tools when near the bone to avoid injuring the skeletal material.

The body had been flexed at the knees and was lying partially on his left side with head facing to the northwest. The body was aligned on a 40/220 degree axis with the head to the southwest and the feet to the northeast (Figure 7).

The large size of the skeleton indicates it is probably a male. The occipital portion of the skull exhibits slight flattening indicating some cradleboard flattening. The skull contains no teeth. Most of the teeth had been gone for quite some time while the individual was living because bone had grown over nearly all of the teeth sockets. Only the lower incisor teeth sockets remained visible but no incisor teeth were present. The condition of the teeth indicates the individual is probably elderly in age.

A large flat cobble, possibly a dark quartzite, was laid beneath the head. The cobble does not appear to have been ground or utilized. A basalt core/chopper was placed in front of his forehead. A whole McElmo Black-on-white bowl with double checkerboard bands painted on the interior was placed in front of his face. Inside the bowl was placed a large black-on-white (probably McElmo also) olla sherd. The large sherd represented approximately one-third of the vessel. Screening of the burial pit fill was conducted with 1/16th inch screen and numerous midden artifacts were collected, but no other associated grave goods were discovered.

A macrobotanical sample was collected from near the chest cavity during excavation.



Site LA 126581

Feature 1



A pollen wash was conducted on the interior of the whole bowl. The fill of the bowl consisted only of midden material as was all of the burial pit fill, thus macrobotanical samples were not collected from these units.

Pitstructure 1 (Study Unit 20-1)

Excavation of grid unit 146N/110E, placed above the known pitstructure, revealed only a few thin layers of midden. The deposits consisted primarily of thick layers of sand and large gravels containing very few artifacts. Therefore, after excavation and screening of all dirt within 10 cm levels to a depth of approximately 1.0 meter below the excavation block surface, this strategy was terminated. Excavation of the units to the north and east proceeded without screening.

The pitstructure wall above the bench was crudely faced with chunks and slabs of coarse friable yellow sandstone. The rock-lined upper pitstructure wall measured between 50 and 80 cm high. The arc indicates an overall exterior pitstructure diameter of approximately 10 m (33 ft) (see Figure 5).

The profile of Trench 2 had shown a discretely defined midden/trash deposit located in the upper pithouse fill. Clay had pooled in the depression above this midden level. One full 10 cm level was screened within the exposed portion of the pitstructure at the above-mentioned midden deposit. Artifacts were few and thus removal of pitstructure fill continued with no screening until about 10 cm from the bench and above the floor. Excavation of the bench revealed it to be 1.08 m high and 40 cm wide with a well-preserved plaster (no masonry). One primary post support was found within the bench. The unburned post was completely rotted and not viable in terms of a dendrochronological sample. The posthole continued down for about 42 cm below the floor level. At the junction of the upper pitstructure wall and the bench, a stringer trough was present.

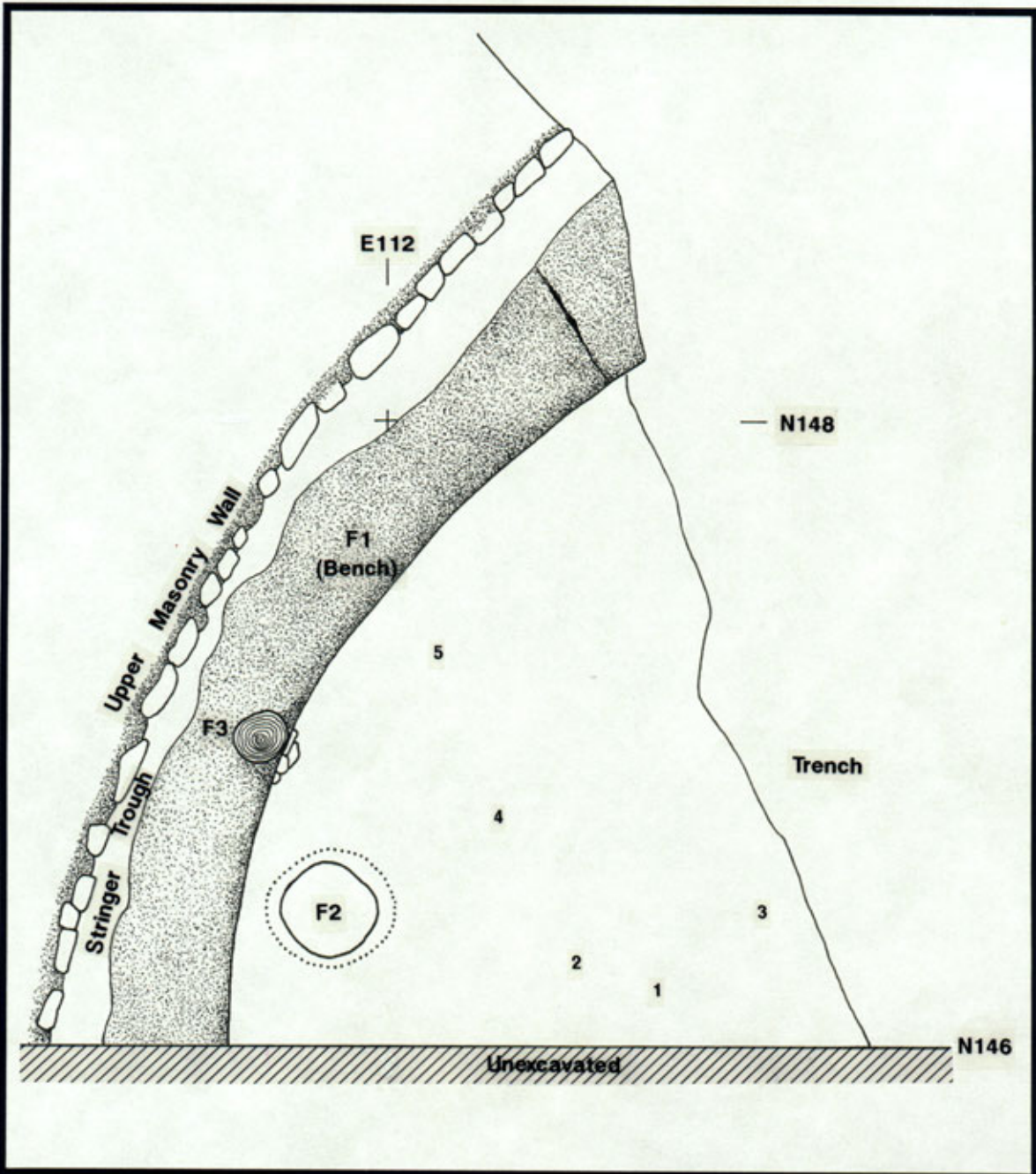
Two floors were discovered in the pitstructure. The upper floor contained only one sub-floor feature (Figure 8). After excavation of that storage feature, approximately three cm of floor surface was removed and screened. This action revealed an additional five sub-floor features (Figure 9). All were excavated and cross-sections drawn.

Cataloged Materials

Attachment A provides a list of all cultural materials recovered from site LA 126581 during the Totah Archaeological Project 1999 Field School.

References

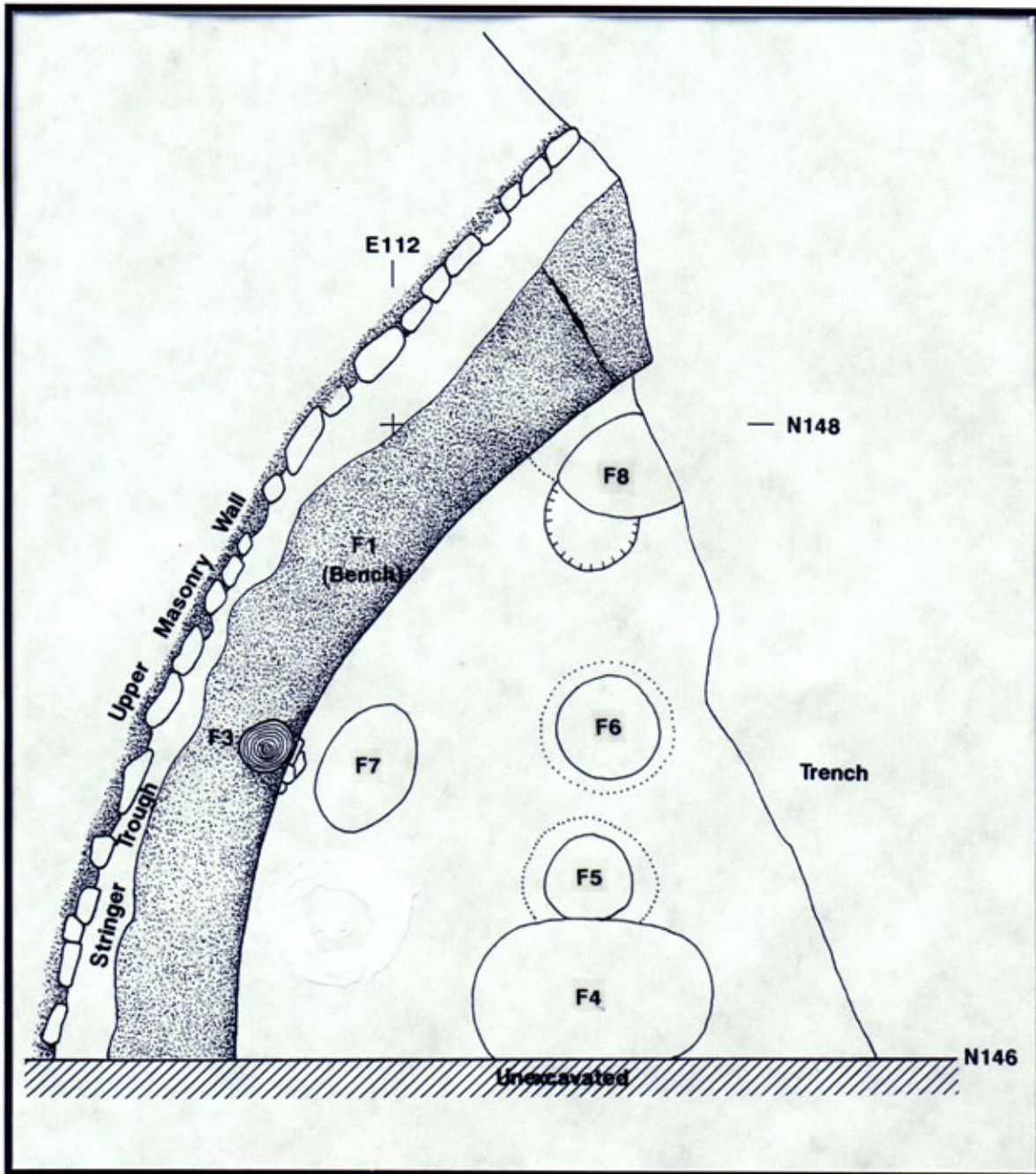
San Juan College Cultural Resources Management Program
1999 Totah Archaeological Project Research Design. Report #98-SJC-063. Submitted to New Mexico State Cultural Properties Review Committee. San Juan College Cultural Resources Management Program, Farmington, New Mexico.



Site LA 126581
Structure 1 - Floor 1

Key to Symbols
 F# = Feature No.
 # = Artifact No.





Site LA 126581
Structure 1 - Floor 2

Key to Symbols
 F# = Feature No.



Site LA 126581: Artifact and Material Summary by Study Unit and Feature.

Study Unit	Feature	Material Class	Material Type	Qty
Trench No. 1		Ceramics	Sherd(s)	1
Trench No. 2		Ceramics	Sherd(s)	17
Trench No. 3		Ceramics	Sherd(s)	11
Structure No. 1		Ceramics	Sherd(s)	73
		Flaked stone	Debitage	66
		Flaked tool	Core	1
			Retouched flake	1
		Groundstone	Groundstone, unspecified	1
			Mano	1
			Slab; shaped, worked, etc.	1
	Fauna	Unmodified bone	4	
	Macrobotanical	Corn cob(s)	1	
	1	Ceramics	Sherd(s)	9
		Flaked stone	Debitage	11
		Fauna	Unmodified bone	7
		Modified bone	Bone ornament	1
	Worked/polished/cut bone		1	
2	Flaked stone	Debitage	2	
	Fauna	Unmodified bone	1	
Midden	Ceramics	Ceramic pendant/ornament	2	
		Figurine	2	
		Minature Vessel	3	
		Sherd(s)	16173	
	Flaked stone	Debitage	12050	
		Obsidian	2	
	Flaked tool	Axe	5	
		Biface	16	
		Chopper	81	
		Core	146	
		Core/hammerstone	32	
		Hammerstone	137	
		Hoe	2	
		Projectile point	16	
		Retouched flake	3	
Uniface	1			

Study Unit	Feature	Material Class	Material Type	Qty
Midden	Unmodified stone	Concretion		1
		Mineral, unspecified		2
		Turquoise		1
	Groundstone	Groundstone ornament		4
		Groundstone, unspecified		6
		Mano		21
		Metate		2
		Polishing stone		9
		Shaft straightner		1
		Slab; shaped, worked, etc.		27
	Fauna	Eggshell		3
		Unmodified bone		3916
	Modified bone	Awl		12
		Bone ornament		6
		Gaming piece		1
		Needle		1
		Scraper		1
Worked/polished/cut bone			12	
Macrobotanical	Corn cob(s)		74	
	Flot, trash fill		2	
Feature 1 (Roasting Pit)	Ceramics	Sherd(s)	10	
	Flaked stone	Debitage	2	
	Groundstone	Groundstone, unspecified	1	
		Metate	2	
	Fauna	Unmodified bone	14	
	Macrobotanical	Flot, trash fill	1	
Feature 2 (Burial)	Human remains	Human interment	1	
	Ceramics	Whole/partial vessel	2	
	Flaked tool	Chopper	1	
	Unmodified stone	Cobble/rock (manuport)	1	
	Macrobotanical	Flot, burial fill	1	
	Microbotanical	Pollen, artifact/vessel fill	1	