

## Indian Canyon Field Trip

September, 2010

The Indian Canyon site is located in an alcove near the end of a canyon complex north and west of Kanab. The site is reminiscent of those at Mesa Verde (alcoves, canyons, juniper – pinion forest, etc. but no ruins). The site is located in a transition area between Anasazi and Fremont territories, probably near a north / south trade route that would have run along what is now route 89.

The journey begins with an approximately 6 mile ride on a sand filled trail that becomes very narrow at the end. The hike is approximately ½ to 1 mile long and descends about 200 feet into the canyon. The trail is well marked with protective railings at key points.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

Figures 1-5 show the beauty of the canyon and the trail leading to the site. Figure 6-7 shows an overview of the alcove and the pictograph wall.



The first striking thing to notice is the size and grandeur of the alcove. It is about 30-50 feet high, over 100 feet long and 50 feet wide. The cliff face is covered with trees and other vegetation, enclosing the site and making the entire site much like a cathedral.

Upon entering the alcove and looking to the left, you see an entire wall of pictographs (Figure 6) in white, red, yellow, and turquoise color. There are no petroglyphs at the site, only pictographs. The BLM signage dates the pictographs to 400 AD, while an internet site dates them to 1200 AD. Both are probably correct and they probably cover a wide time period. They were probably a product of the Archaic (basket makers) then the Anasazi / Fremont and ending with Numic (Shoshone, Ute, Paiute) peoples.

There are no identified ruins at the site. The BLM signage indicates the people lived on the canyon rims in pit houses where they farmed, hunted and gathered. I think the location and orientation of the site would have made it a comfortable place to escape the heat in the summer.

The pictographs consist almost entirely of faces and human forms – a portrait gallery. Absent are the symbols that we in the St. George area associate with petroglyphs. There are no spirals, rain symbols, cloud symbols, serpents / lightning, sheep, deer, lizards – in fact almost no symbols at all except for the human forms. This indicates that the site was either made by very different peoples (unlikely) or would have had a completely different purpose.

At the top of the wall are a series of 12 faces in groups of 3. They are outlined in white and have eyes and mouths. They also have feather headdresses consisting of 3, 4 or 5 feathers. The feathers appear to be made of a series of dots. None of these figures were “over written” indicating that they were made at a later date than most of the other images or they were very important. Some of the portraits had red ear bobs and there is a large pendant between 2 of the portraits. See figures 8-11.



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

Figures 8-11 show the “portraits” – Twelve in total.

The remaining images are human figures. They are of differing sizes and body types: Fig 12 - Rounded shoulders, flowing in white and yellow; Fig 13 - Squared – rectangular in white and yellow; Fig 14 – Rectangular, triangular in yellow, very sharp angled in red; Fig 15 – stick figures in white; Fig 16 – more stick figures in white; Fig 17 – larger round shouldered in turquoise; Fig 18 – triangular and rectangular in yellow and round shoulder in white highlighted in yellow and red stick figure.



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

Figure 12 – 18 – Various body types at the site

In the above figures 12-18, note that many of the figures have feathered head dresses with various numbers of feathers. Some of the figures have red ear bobs. Many of the figures are holding hands. Most of the yellow figures are holding hands, either with other yellow figures but also with white figures. In Figure 12 and 19, the yellow figure appears to over



write the two white figures. In Figure 18, the yellow figures have white head dresses. Some figures have round heads, while others are very square. The red figures are the most clear and distinct – almost as if they have been recently highlighted.



Figure 20

Figure 20 shows a round shouldered person highlighted, this time in red. This is similar to a previous Figure (18) showing yellow highlighting. This figure also shows a white person with red ear bobs and a feathered head dress, but this time the feathers are pointed outward radially from the head, while most of the others on the wall are pointed straight up.



Figure 21

Figure 21 shows a very large number of images that overlap each other. However, in the center are two very large images of humans done in what I would call the Fremont style or perhaps the cave valley style – square heads, square broad shoulders, trapezoidal body.

These two large figures are over written with white, yellow figures. There is a white face on the center right that is over written with a red figure. Also in Figure 21 on the lower right is a stick figure that appears to be animated – walking to the right while swinging his arms (“life is good”).



Figure 22

Figure 22 shows a group of 10 yellow stick figures that appear to be holding hands. There are other groupings like this in white.



Figure 23



Figure 23 shows two white figures over written with a red angular bodied human. At the same time, it appeared that the red artist also painted solid red lines on the top of the two white images to give them square heads and also painted red ear bobs on them. He also painted a red cross for a mouth on the right white person.



Figure 24

Figure 24 shows white feathers painted on two very faded white figures. It also appears that the red ear bobs were added at a latter time.

The two cases of animals appearing are in Figures 25 and 26. Figure 25 has what appears to be a coyote (facing left) and a sheep (facing right) using the same body and legs. There is also a animal shape in the center (undefined) and a sheep on the top right. All of these images are in brownish red and appear to be done by the same artist. Figure 25 also shows two yellow figures holding hands and a series of white humans holding hands. The largest white image is highlighted in red (a different color red). There is also a stick figure at the lower right.

There appears to be a horse in the top center of Figure 26. Horses did not arrive in the Kanab area until the late 1600's or latter which could date at least a portion of the panel.





Figure 25



Figure 26

Some other comments:

All of the figures have all of their arms and legs. In all cases they are pointed toward the earth. Most do not have fingers or toes, but they do have 5 when they have them. Therefore it can be concluded that these figures are not spirit helpers, but probably important people from the clans / tribes.

The stick figures images are probably Umic in origin. The rounded figures are probably basket maker and the square shouldered people are probably Anasazi or Fremont.

Generally the most detailed and the best drawings are the oldest and the most primitive (stick figures) are the most recent.

There was one petroglyph found on the trip. This was on the trail and was noticed after we left the alcove, Figure 27.



Figure 27