

Falling Man (Gold Butte)

On Saturday, February 20th, seven hardy members of DAS gathered in Bloomington, under a threatening sky, for our trek to Mesquite to meet Nancy Hall, the guide for our adventure. Nancy led us into the “beyond the beyond” of Gold Butte to the Whitney-Hartman site, also known as the “Falling Man” site. The “Gods” were with us as the weather was ideal for the hike, fair sky and mild temperatures for the entire day.



We learned that the Gold Butte area has been in use for thousands of years by the Archaic, Anasazi, Patayan and Paiute peoples. Here they hunted, gathered desert plants and conducted ceremonies. In the neighboring Whitney-Pockets area is evidence of many habitation sites and Agave roasting pits that were used to process Agave into food. The petroglyphs and petroglyphs in Whitney-Hartman were created by these people.

A prepared trail lined with new desert plants, courtesy of Friends of Gold Butte, lead from the parking lot to the first series of panels.

The first major panel (1, 2, & 3) is on a high rock. It appears to be very old due to the nature of the figures, which are mostly curvilinear in nature and can probably be attributed to the Archaic people. There are some figures added which are shown as lighter in color and superimposed upon the older figures (3).



(1)



(2)

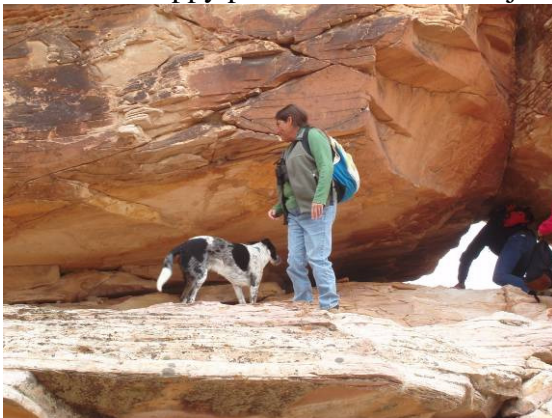


(3)



(4)

The trial continues with glyphs along the way. Finally we reach the ascent in preparation for the entrance to the “portal” (4). Figure (5) shows Nancy and her dog, Lady Bones, guiding members through the portal. There are glyphs at both sides of the portal. Upon exiting the portal and turning 180 degrees, you can see a glyph directly above the portal. It shows a happy person who made the journey this far, his “reemergence” (6).



(4)



(6)

Traveling further along the ridge, you come to the “Falling Man” (7). This is a single glyph with no other glyphs near it. What is the significance?



(7)

Next we encountered a number of glyphs on “white” rock (8). These appeared to be much more crudely done than others at the site. The individual peck marks could easily be identified. Additionally the figures were difficult to identify. Is this due to the type of rock, or the expertise of the artist?

We then came upon what Nancy called the “slot machine” panel (9). See the cherries.



(8)



(9)



(10)

The journey continued along the slick rock, passing a number of “pot holes” or “tanks” that were filled with water. Upon entering another canyon, we encountered “picture rock” (10). It is called this because people like to have their picture taken in front of it. We were told this panel has glyphs from three time periods, archaic, anasazi and patayan. The archaic glyphs are the oldest and are typically curvilinear or rectilinear in form. The anasazi glyphs are identified as people or animals having “full formed” bodies. The patayan people typically are more “stick” figures with large hands and/or feet. Likewise the animals are more like stick figures. It is also the first panel in the area having “burden baskets” (far left).

Continuing to scramble up to another ridge, we came upon a series of panels. One flat panel showed the ingenuity of the artist. See how the toes of the footprint extend over the side of the rock, as if holding onto the rock (11). Another covered a large area on the cliff face (12). One of which was called the “school yard” panel (13), because it looked like it contains a school yard swing set (left). However, it is probably talking about rain (or lack of it) and the problems of the people. Note the number of upside down “burden baskets”.



(11)



(12)



(13)

Exiting the area, we encountered additional glyphs formed on white rock (12 & 13). These seemed more carefully prepared than the earlier ones. It appeared that these glyphs were enhanced by the use of paint. Pictographs in the gold butte area are attributed to the Paiute peoples. Did they create the entire panel or did they only enhance portions of the panel that they wanted to emphasize?



(14)



(15)

This was another great adventure and a great day. Upon returning to St. George in the late afternoon, the sky opened up with a day and a half of rain. The Gods were with us!