

Santa Clara Canyon

Santa Clara Canyon is part of the Santa Clara River Reserve, an assemblage of public lands managed jointly by the BLM and the cities of Ivins and Santa Clara Utah. This managed land also includes the petroglyph area of Anasazi Ridge.

The Santa Clara River flows through the canyon, Figure 1, with the petroglyphs on the north side of the river, some at or near the trail level and some high on the cliffs.



Figure 1 – Santa Clara Canyon from the north rim

Figures 2 through 5 are some trail level glyphs seen upon entering the canyon.

Higher up the wall is a set of glyphs shown in total in Figure 6a. These are detailed from left in Figure 6b, which is an anthro “bird person” with large hands and feet and one extremely large hand. Figure 6b is a two headed anthro. Figure 6c is a ghost like image that could be a rock feature or a glyph or an enhanced rock feature – never the less very ghost like.



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6a



Figure 6b



Figure 6c



Figure 6d

High on the cliff is Figure 7a, showing some animals on the left and a set of beautifully created rectilinear glyphs on the right. These can also be seen in good detail from the rim of the canyon. Figure 7b shows a magnified portion of the panel. The main image in Figure 7b has the same general appearance of a “song glyph” which was a prominent motif in the Gunlock Road petroglyphs. Gunlock Road is only about 10 miles up river from Santa Clara Canyon.

Also high on the cliff is Figure 8. Shown is an anthro with a square body and head with his arms and legs pointed down at right angles. Also are two sheep and a wavy image with a “dot” at one end and two “arms” at the other end.

Further along the trail are two large boulders that have glyphs on their “backside” facing the cliff. The glyphs cannot be seen from the trail. These two rocks have glyphs that are perhaps the most interesting in the canyon.

Figure 9a and 9b shows the main glyphs on the first rock. It appears to be a family, two adults and two children and it looks like they are holding hands. Directly above them is a series of concentric circles. Above and to the right of them is a necklace (also shown in Figure 9c). In fact, there are many necklaces on this rock. Also are two reclining flute players, with one shown in Figure 9d. The glyphs on this face of the rock are completely



Figure 7a



Figure 7b



Figure 8



Figure 9a



Figure 9b



Figure 9c



Figure 9d

repatinated. It has been estimated that these glyphs were crated in the Basket Maker period, well over two thousand years ago. These glyphs are difficult to see and photograph due to the repatination and the orientation of the rock face relative to the sun.

On the side of the rock are additional glyphs, Figures 9e and 9f. Figure 9e is another necklace and another reclining flute player. Figure 9f has a bear paw and a horizontal serpent line.



Figure 9e



Figure 9f

The glyphs on the adjacent rock, Figure 10a and 10b, have a similar orientation causing photographic problems. The glyphs on this panel are very unique. Along the top is a large serpent with a number of bends. At each bend is a necklace. There are at least seventeen necklaces on this one panel. The glyphs are repatinated in some cases and covered with lichen in other areas. Figure 10b shows three small deer / elk. Morning or mid-day is not a good time to photograph this panel.



Figure 10a



Figure 10b

Further along the trail is a boulder on the left side of the trail with a glyph (Figure 11) containing another necklace.

The necklace motif is concentrated in a few areas around the St. George basin. They are most prevalent in Santa Clara Canyon, but are also seen at the Maverick site further east along the Santa Clara River, at Fort Pierce Wash, at Serenity Hill West and at Quail Creek Ranch. Surprisingly, there are no necklaces at the Anasazi Ridge site, which is essentially on the rim and about 1-2 miles west above the Santa Clara Canyon sites.



Figure 11



Figure 12

Along the trail on the left is another unique boulder, Figure 12. It has within it remnants of petrified wood – specifically wood from a coconut palm tree that dates to about 200 million years ago, when Utah was on the west coast of North America and located near the equator.



Figure 13



Figure 14

As the canyon widens at the west end between the trail and the river is a habitation site, Figure 13. Grinding holes can be found in the slick rock adjacent to this site, Figure 14.

In this area are a set of boulders containing the last glyphs in the canyon. Figure 15 has a large anthro with outstretched arms and legs with large hands and feet. He is partially covered with lichen. Figure 15b shows some detail of an adjacent rock with an anthro with an arc over his head. Also present are a series of crosses, likely the road runner clan symbol.



Figure 15a



Figure 15 b

Figure 16a shows a rock with little patina. The glyphs could be an upside down burden basket, corn plan or tree of life (Figure 16 b) and an elk and deer (Figure 16a and 16c).

Figure 17 shows a boulder with a number of glyphs on the top surface, including a number of anthros.

The final observation is that the glyphs along the river in the canyon are very different from the glyphs at Anasazi Ridge that is on the canyon rim, essentially above the glyphs in the canyon. Curious!



Figure 16a



Figure 16b



Figure 16c



Figure 17

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