RESULTS OF EXCAVATION OF UNIT R1 AT NANCY PATTERSON VILLAGE, UTAH, 42SA2110, 28 JUNE THROUGH 08 JULY, 2014

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Introduction

This paper will report on the findings and preliminary results of excavations of Unit R1 at Nancy Patterson Village, 42SA2110. Excavation and examination of artifacts took place over the course of 11 days, from 28 June through 08 July, 2014. Excavation was undertaken by Gerald Trainor and Nicolai Trainor, acting under Daniel Cutrone, project director of the Nancy Patterson Archaeological Project. Excavation focused on a single room in the southeast corner of the lower, floodplain pueblo of the site (Figure 1). Excavation began as a 1 by 1 meter unit on the interior of the room and was placed based on the exposure of the northwest, inside corner of two interior walls running east and south from this point. The unit was ultimately expanded to a 1 meter by 1.6 meter unit once the north-south trending wall was traced towards the adjacent plaza, and its adjoining east-west trending wall was discovered.

Background

Nancy Patterson Village is a large, multicomponent, temporally dynamic site spanning Basketmaker III through Pueblo III (AD 700- 1250) (Janetski and Hurst 1984; Wilde and Thompson 1988). The site is located at the confluence of Montezuma and Cross Canyons in San Juan County, Utah (Figure 2). Its location gave it not only access to water that flowed through the canyons and the wide canyon bottom floodplain for farming, but also potential control of traffic up and down Montezuma Canyon and eastward up Cross Canyon towards Hovenweep. The site consists of the commanding, mesa top component with its large viewshed and the floodplain component below and to the south. Views up and down Montezuma Canyon take in other dwelling sites, shrine sites, and petroglyph panels. The mesa top site was given the site identifier of 42SA2110 which is now used to refer to the entire Nancy Patterson Village, including the floodplain site.

The site is mentioned in early literature by Prudden (1903) during his exploration of the San Juan watershed. There are also references to Montezuma Canyon and its abundance of ruins by Cummings (1910), and other early archaeologists. Since that time investigation of the site has been undertaken by various archaeologists and students from Brigham Young University, and more recently by Cutrone and his students along with help from Blanding residents. The land on which Nancy Patterson Village sits is privately held and, being now more closely controlled, it is hoped also protected from further vandalism, looting, and damage.

Excavation

Excavation of Unit R1 was undertaken to identify the lower, plaza edge of this late-phase room on the boundary of the Nancy Patterson Village, to identify architectural phases within the room itself, establish dates of occupation through artifact identification, and relate these findings to adjoining and adjacent rooms within this plaza group and the Nancy Patterson Village as a whole.

Level 1-

Level 1 was a soft, dry humus layer consisting of bioturbated, light gray, clayey soil mixed with limited darker, organic soil. The soil was considered overburden and slump, and contained fallen, cut or shaped wall stones including many protruding from Level 2, below. Level 1 had been recently disturbed due to brush clearing and in places was mixed with the underlying Level 2. The level was very thin, approximately 5- 10 cm in thickness, and after breaking through the dry surface, was for the most part indistinguishable from Level 2 below it.

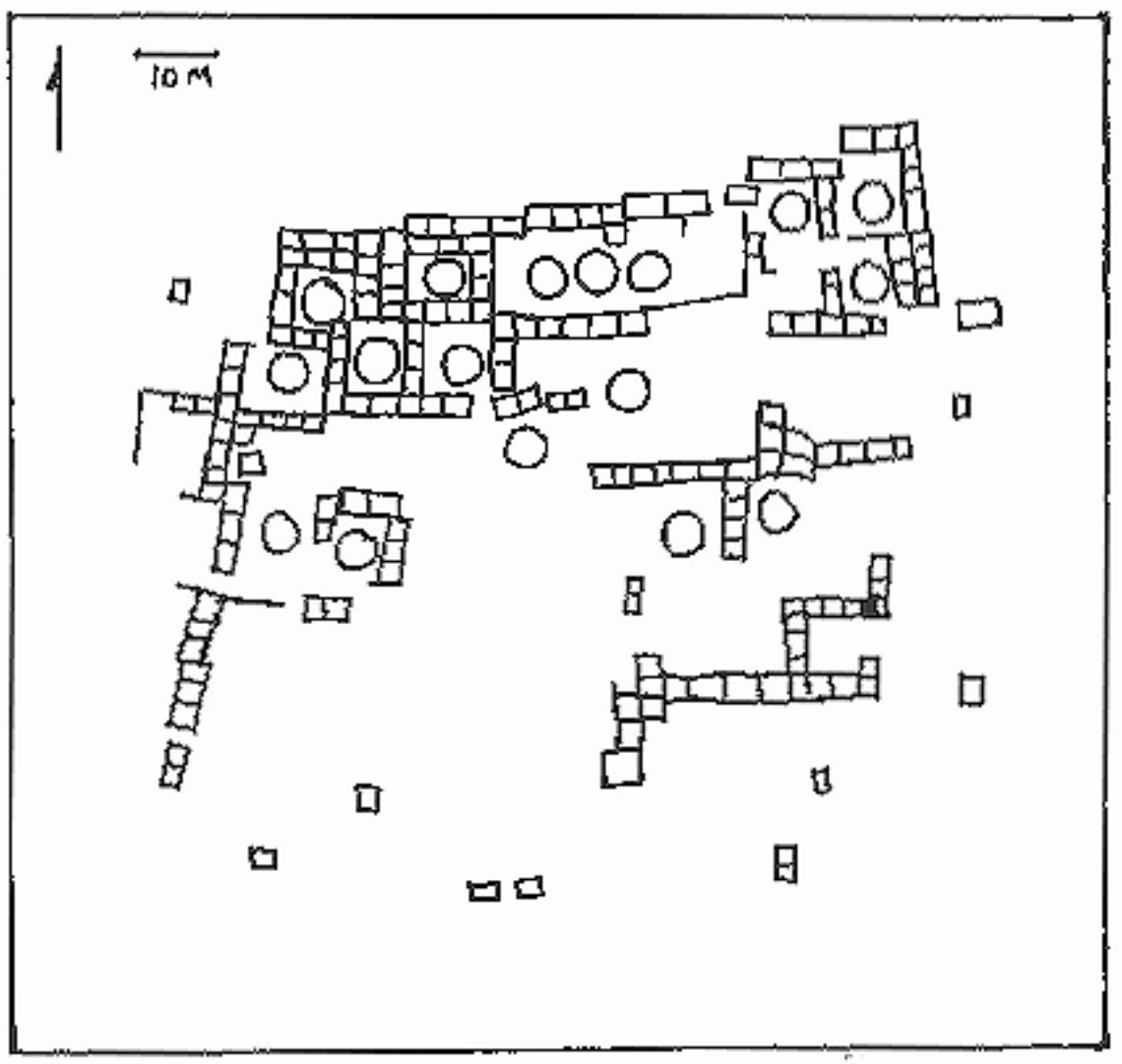


Figure 1- Map of Nancy Patterson Village floodplain site showing location of Unit R1 (shaded) (after Wilde and Thompson 1988).

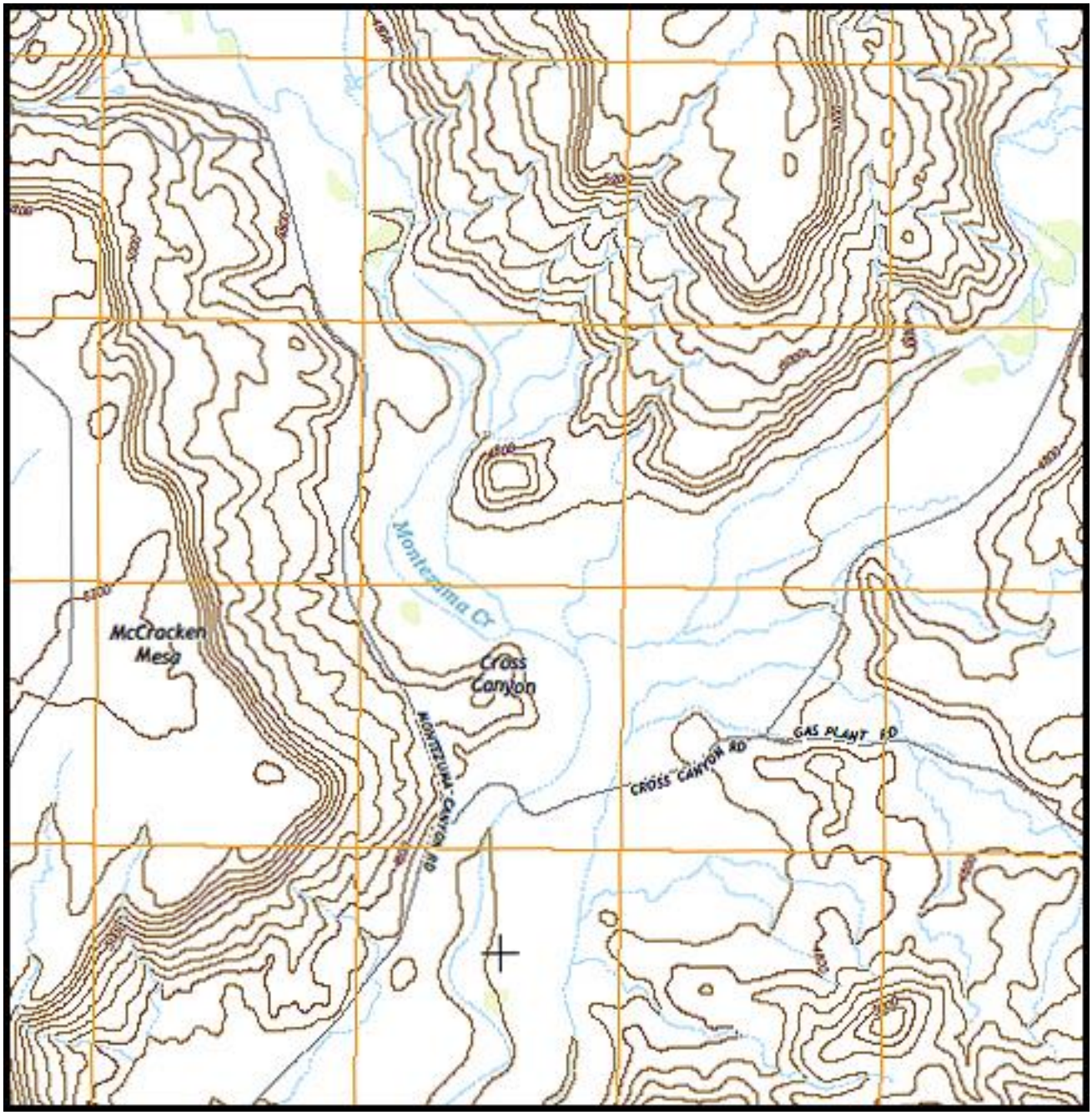
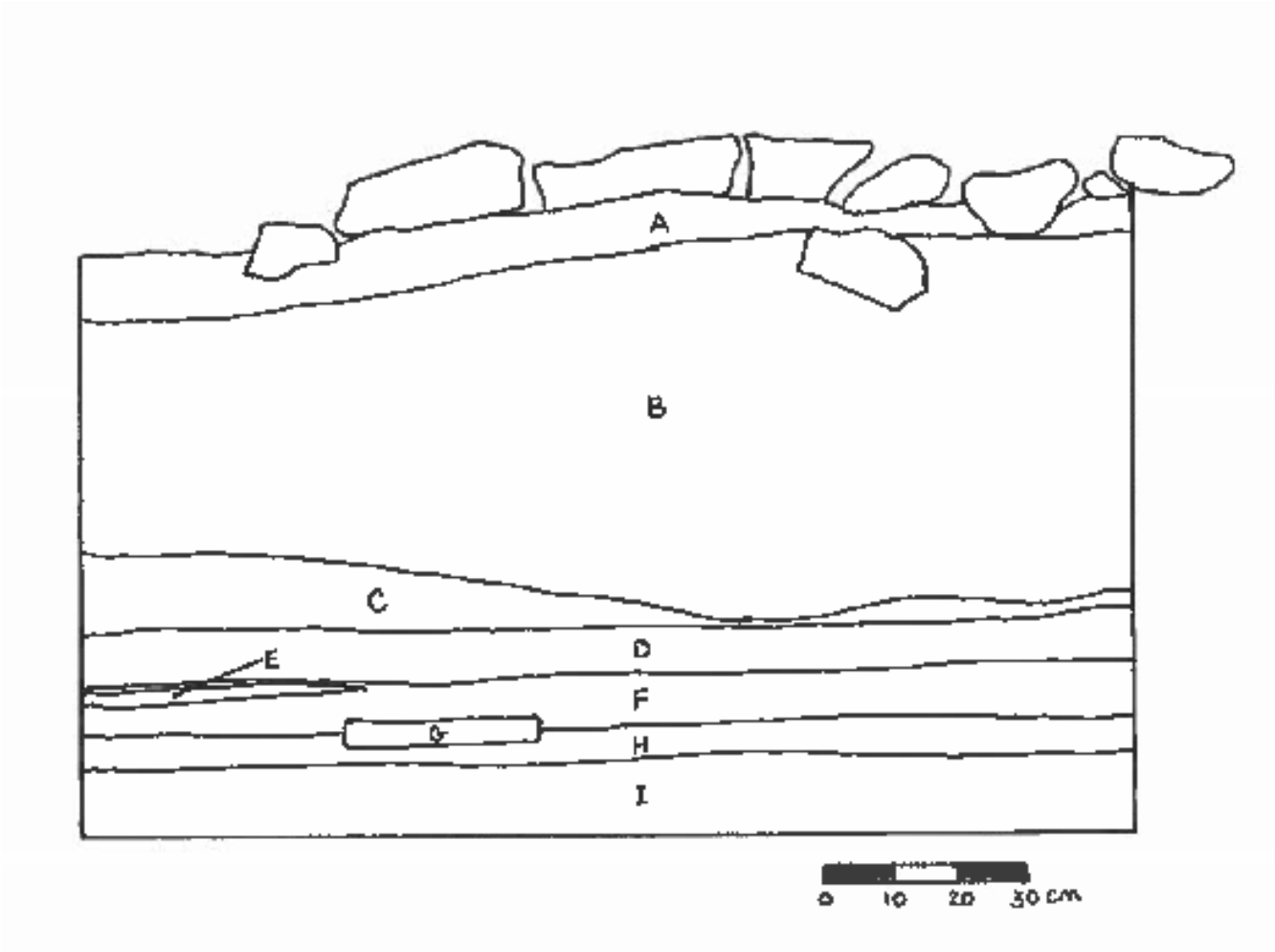


Figure 2- Map of Montezuma Canyon and Cross Canyon confluence area showing Nancy Patterson mesa top and floodplain site locations.

Level 2-

Level 2 consisted of soft, dry, light brown, sandy-clayey soil. It contained slump from the room's walls including many cut or shaped wall stones. The matrix was for the most part sterile, aside from the wall stones, a single Mesa Verde corrugated sherd, and one fire-stained piece of sandstone. A single historic artifact, a fragment of a modern 7-Up soda bottle, was found in this level approximately 10 cm below unit datum (BUD), well within the zone of bioturbation, at the south, plaza side of the unit. The level varied in depth from approximately 55 cm to 67 cm BUD.



Unit R1 Profile, View to West

A- Level 1- organic soil
B- Level 2- slump and wall stones
C- Level 3- blown sand, high concentration of Mesa Verde Corrugated sherds
D- Level 4- Floor 1
E- Feature 1- charcoal lense
F- Level 5- fill below Floor 1, with high artifact concentration
G- Feature 2- metate impression
H- Level 6- Floor 2
I- Level 7- fill below Floor 2

Figure 3- Final west wall profile, to approximately 97 cm below unit datum.

Level 3-
Level 3 was made up of fine to medium grained, yellowish-orange to light brown, loose sand. This sand appeared to be deposited by wind over time. It varied in thickness from 10-12 cm in the southern, plaza side of the unit where it sat upon Floor 1, to between 0 and 2 cm in the upper, northern part of the unit. It contained very small (2 mm to 1 cm) charcoal inclusions, also appearing blown in and concentrated in the southern side of the unit. The level showed marked stratification in the east wall profile (Figure 4). Level 3 varied in depth from approximately 64 cm to 68 cm BUD.

Level 3 contained a high concentration of ceramic artifacts, all found in the southern ½ meter of the unit in the matrix of sand. A total of 45 Mesa Verde Corrugated sherds were collected in the southern, plaza side of the unit (Figure 5). This approximately ½ by 1 meter area also showed the thickest concentration of wind-blown sand, as noted above. Field analysis of the ceramics shows that they likely came from three different vessels, none of which were complete, all dating from AD 1100-1300. Preservation of the ceramics was varied, in part due to burning of some of the sherds. One vessel in particular showed evidence of sustained high heat, being very brittle and with edges badly charred.

Also found in this concentration were a single piece of fire cracked rock and two large pieces of charcoal (collected for dating.) These artifacts, along with the ceramics, were likely deposited on the floor from outside of the unit based on the lack of ash or thermal staining on Floor 1 below. As noted, additional very small charcoal fragments were found blown into the sandy matrix of this level and may have been deposited with these artifacts and mixed with the sand as it was blown in.

Figure 5- Mesa Verde corrugated ceramics collected from Level 3.

Level 4-
Level 4 is designated as Floor 1. The floor itself was hard packed, light gray to light brown, clayey soil, and was easily discernible from the sandy matrix above. It averaged approximately 8 cm in thickness. The bottom of Level 4 varied in depth from 72 cm to 77 cm BUD.

Level 5-
Level 5 is considered a fill layer below Floor 1. It was made up of a dense, yellowish-orange, sandy-clayey matrix. There was color variation in this level in the area of the artifact concentration, described below. Soil here tended towards light gray in color due to the amount of charcoal and ash mixed into the matrix. Level 5 averaged approximately 8 cm in thickness. Level 5 contained a thin lens of charcoal, designated Feature 1, just below Floor 1 (Figure 6). It was limited to the southern edge of the unit, extending northward into the unit approximately 38 cm. The charcoal feature was 4 cm at its thickest. Due to lack of thermal staining, this charcoal may have been deposited in the fill layer from outside of the unit. But its placement and concentration of the charcoal directly at the back wall of the unit, and the thickness of the concentration, indicate a single or short-term fire deliberately burned in place. Charcoal was collected from this lens for dating.

Level 5 contained a high concentration of artifacts including cores, hammerstones, secondary and tertiary lithic debitage, and ground stone tools including a mano and axe. It also contained ceramics, jacal, and a small mammal and bird bone, an unidentified talon, and fragments of turkey shells (Figures 7-12). This artifact concentration was located in the southern ½ by 1 meter of the unit, directly below the ceramic concentration in Level 3. Field examination of the hammerstones and ground stone tools shows that all were well used and were likely redeposited as fill taken from a midden.

Figure 6- Feature 1- charcoal lense below Floor 1. View to east.

Figure 7- Hammerstones collected from Level 5 artifact concentration.

Figure 8- Lithic material collected from Level 5 artifact concentration.

Figure 9- Metate (left) and axe (right) collected from Level 5 artifact concentration.

Figure 10- Ceramics collected from Level 5 artifact concentration.

Figure 11- Bone, talon, and shell collected from Level 5 artifact concentration.

Figure 12- Jacal from Level 5 artifact concentration.

Level 6-
Level 6 is designated as Floor 2. Floor 2 was made up of the same light gray, sandy-clayey soil we have seen throughout the unit and was easily distinguished from the fill above. It was densely packed and rather thin, averaging approximately 5 cm in thickness. On top of Floor 2 was Feature 2, a clear impression in the dried floor of a metate (Figure 13). The impression was very clear along the west wall, where it was also visible in the wall itself. Very thin pieces of sandstone used to level the metate were still in place. No physical remains of the metate were found in the unit. It can be assumed that the metate was still serviceable and was removed before fill was deposited on Floor 2.

Figure 13- Feature 2- metate impression on Floor 2.

Level 7-
Level 7 was made up of the same matrix as the levels above. It contained only one small rim shed and one secondary flake and appears to cover the initial building surface for the roomblock. There was a visible soil change at this level, to a very light gray, fine-grained silty-clayey soil. Where the fill of Level 7 ends it is clearly visible that “foundation” stones are sitting on the surface below. Whether or not this is paleosol below is not yet determined.

Discussion

Nancy Patterson Village is an extensive multicomponent site spanning some 500 years of occupation. Unit R1 is located on the perphery of the site, and related to the end of that occupation sequence. All pottery found in the unit is of the Mesa Verde style, suggesting later occupation. No diagnostic chipped stone artifacts were found within the unit. No intact ceramics were found, nor were any artifacts that might be considered as "important" to their owners. This is suggestive of a deliberate withdrawal from the site, as opposed to one done in haste. We know that during the late PIII period, or the reorganization period as it is called by Cordell and Gumerman (1989), a steady dispersion of the population at Nancy Patteson Village occurred (Wilde and Thompson, 1988) and the findings in Unti R1 suggest that its inhabitants likely followed this trend.

The simple room blocks, with unhewn to crudely hewn wall stones and jacal walls are indicative of simple residential units. While it is unclear how much overburden was removed from this plaza group during the 1980's excavation and mapping of the site, or during earlier research at the site, there are piles of wall stones near this unit that were clearly removed from some of the structures. The lack of wall stones in Unit R1 overburden may therefore be due to earlier clearing. But jacal fragments from the Level 5 artifact concentration, while being secondarily deposited, do clearly show that jacal was a construction form used at Nancy Patterson.

The room block where Unit R1 is located was also of interest to us due to its possible separation from what should be adjoining rooms linking it to the rest of the structures in this horseshoe-shaped, plaza oriented group of structures. This apparent anomaly may be due to the fact that the adjacent room was of jacal construction. As Cordell notes, in some later settlements (10^{th} and 11^{th} century) jacal stood side by side with masonry construction (Rohn 1989). Additionally, while there is no direct reference to excavation within the unit or adjacent to it, the roomblock may have been investigated and not fully documented. Finally, there is a large amount of looting throughout the site which could explain the anomaly.

While it is far beyond the scope of the data of such a small excavation unit to speculate too much, our findings are congruent with the conclusions of Wilde and Thompson (1988). They state that occupation at Nancy Patterson Village peaked during PI and PII times, then again during the middle to late PIII. Artifact dates from Unit R1 conform to their model, all being late Mesa Verde style ceramics.

List of Figures

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