

Summary of Globe-Miami Cultural Sites Field Trip

Besh Ba Gowah Archaeological Park (Globe), Gila Pueblo (Globe), Bullion Plaza Cultural Center (Miami)

April 23, 2021

Text below is based on observations by Dennis DuBose who participated on the Field Trip, with some additional research. It was written by Dennis DuBose who is responsible for all inaccuracies and photos (unless otherwise credited).

This Field Trip was sponsored by San Tan Chapter and Rim Country Chapter of the Arizona Archaeological Society. Members of both of these chapters and of Phoenix Chapter participated. Kim Gilles, Secretary of Rim Country Chapter and a member of San Tan Chapter, arranged, managed, and organized this Field Trip.

First, the Field Trippers gathered at Besh Ba Gowah Archeological Park and Museum in Globe, Arizona. The partially reconstructed multistory, cobble masonry pueblo at this site was a center of Salado Culture. It overlooks Pinal Creek and is downstream a few miles from Gila Pueblo, which became the second stop of this Field Trip.

The Besh Ba Gowah pueblo was occupied between 1225 to 1400 AD.

Irene Singleton Vickrey supervised the excavation and reconstruction of the site from 1935 to 1940 as part of a WPA Depression Era project. Besh Ba Gowah yielded the most extensive Salado Culture collection ever recovered. It shows in the on-site museum displays.

Excavation revealed that parts of the pueblo were multistoried. Some parts of the multistoried section have been reconstructed to give the visitor a glimpse of what the pueblo may have looked like in its prime.

Irene Vickrey died suddenly in 1946 at the age of 35.

The site is very close to the old downtown area of Globe, originally a settlement of miners. Apaches called the settlement Besh Ba Gowah meaning "Place of Metal." Irene Vickrey chose this name for the prehistoric Salado pueblo.

In 1981 the City of Globe and Arizona State University re-excavated and refurbished the site as an Archaeological Park.

The Archaeological Park is within a Globe City Park containing athletic fields and other typical park facilities. The Archaeological Park has three components, the Salado Pueblo ruin, a museum, and a Cultural Ethno-Botanical Garden.

A significant feature of Besh Ba Gowah is the Entry Corridor. This was apparently the only entrance into the pueblo, and it leads into the center. It was apparently covered at the time of occupation.

Presumably, the purpose of the corridor was defensive.



Looking down the Besh Ba Gowah corridor from the entrance opening.



Field Trippers in the Besh Ba Gowah Entry Corridor

Photo by Sharon DuBose



Coming Up the Corridor from the Entrance and Looking to the Right



Looking Back towards the Entrance from the Interior End of the Besh Ba Gowah Entry Corridor



Section of Besh Ba Gowah to the Right near End of Corridor

Photo by Mari Townsend



Photo by Sharon DuBose

Looking towards the Two-Story Reconstruction from Outside the Pueblo on the Right of the Entrance



A Passageway through the Reconstructed Two-Story Leads to the Other Side



Some Rooms inside are Set Up as they might have Looked in Prehistoric Habitation
Photos by Mari Townsend



Alternatively, Peek in through Openings

Photo by Mari Townsend



Having Passed through the Two-Story Reconstruction from the Corridor and Emerging on the Other Side



Turning Around and Looking in the Opposite Direction from the Previous Photo, away from the Two-Story Structure



Field Trippers Gathering after Emerging from the Two-Story Reconstruction Photo by Sharon DuBose



An Unusual Structure to the Left of the Entry Corridor Coming into the Pueblo. The Pathway Passes next to it on the Other Side, after exiting the Two-Story Section and Coming back towards the Entry Corridor

One of the Field Trippers, Jim Britton, personally worked on stabilizing this structure 30 years ago. He says at the time they referred to it as a “mini-platform mound.”

Jim, Treasurer of San Tan Chapter of the Arizona Archaeological Society, and a member of Rim Country Chapter, has long been involved in stabilization and restoration of historical and prehistorical structures in Arizona. Among other projects, currently Jim is working on stabilization of the excavated rooms at Goat Camp Ruin in Payson, with the assistance of a very few volunteers.

These volunteers work on the same days as ongoing Goat Camp excavations. If you are interested in learning and participating in stabilization of prehistoric structures, you can contact Jim Britton by email at jabritton@cox.net.

The Besh Ba Gowah Museum is small but artifact rich. Here are a few photos of some of the exhibits.



A Field Tripper Examining Models of Besh Ba Gowah in its Time of Habitation and Today

On the far wall you can see a cabinet of ceramics, part of which is shown closer in the following photo ...





Display of Some Seashells and Shell Ornaments (Broken Bracelets Mostly) found at Besh Ba Gowah



Polishing Stones, Manos, Ground Axe Heads, and other Stone Tools at Besh Ba Gowah



Just a Few of the Many Points on Display At Besh Ba Gowah. Many appear to be made of Obsidian, which is not surprising as nearby Superior, Arizona, is a major source of Obsidian.

Adjacent to the Besh Ba Gowah Museum is a Cultural Ethno-Botanical Garden.

Such gardens are common at staffed Southwest archaeological sites. In my experience, such gardens are typically very small, crowding in a few each of the usual assemblage of cultivated plants, intermixed with weeds. Furthermore, they are usually dried out barely surviving, if not already dead.

The Besh Ba Gowah garden is large, with separate plots for each species or variety. It is well maintained, clean, and irrigated regularly. The garden includes several varieties of maize (corn), several kinds of beans grown by these prehistoric peoples, winter squash, amaranth, and perhaps more. On a previous visit several years ago, the garden had a plot of teosinte, the wild ancestor of maize. However, this year teosinte is either missing or unlabeled.

Unfortunately, this early in the growing season, there was not much to see, as most items were planted as seeds only a couple or three weeks ago. There were just recent sprouts. The garden should look a lot better in summer, when it has filled out.

For years I had read that a common food plant grown by Prehistoric Americans was amaranth. I had no idea what that was. Since that time, I have seen photos and live plants of amaranth. I recognized it as a weed my father warned me about as a boy ... "Pull these Careless Weeds up before they go to seed. They make a million seeds. If you don't get them in time, you will really have them next year." A Botany Professor told me that "A weed is a plant we just haven't figured out what it's good for yet. We should not blame it for our own failings." The Prehistoric Americans figured out that amaranth seeds were good to eat and nutritious, although small. They knew what amaranth was for and had domesticated it.



View of the Besh Ba Gowah Cultural Ethno-Botanical Garden



Plot of One Variety of Maize (Corn) at Besh Ba Gowah Ethno-Botanical Garden



Field Trippers at Besh Ba Gowah

Photo by Mari Townsend

The next stop on the Globe-Miami Cultural Sites Field Trip was Gila Pueblo. Gila Pueblo is only a few miles upstream on Pinal Creek from Besh Ba Gowah, less than a ten minute drive.

Besh Ba Gowah and Gila Pueblo were contemporaneous, but Besh Ba Gowah had been abandoned by the time of the destruction of Gila Pueblo in the early 1400s. The archaeological evidence is that it succumbed to a violent and powerful attack. The remains of some 70 people were found, laying out in the open, unburied, men, women, young children, infants. Only one teenager was found. Much foodstuff was left untaken. Speculation is that it was a slave raid from another village in the area.



Part of the Restored Section of Gila Pueblo

Photo by Mari Townsend



The Gila Pueblo Campus of Eastern Arizona College includes Parts of the Prehistoric Gila Pueblo Integrated with College Buildings, with Pathways, Benches, Tables, and Plantings making an Outdoor Rest Area for Students and Staff

It appears that early excavations, followed by reconstruction, were then followed by destruction. The site was originally on private land, but sometime after excavation it was donated to the University of Arizona, which moved the collected artifacts to its Tucson Campus.



An Unexcavated Room at Gila Pueblo



The next stop was the Bullion Plaza Center in Miami, Arizona. It is housed in a former school building built in 1923.

My photographs of the museum displays do not do justice to the holdings. Many of my photos were blurred, dark, or badly composed. Also, glass cases often have reflections. I discarded many of them, and the remaining ones give only a glimpse of this fascinating and wide-ranging museum.



The Globe-Miami area has a rich variety of minerals and mining history, & it is displayed in the Museum.



Part of the Collection of Polished Mineral Balls Cut out of Geologic Deposits in the Area

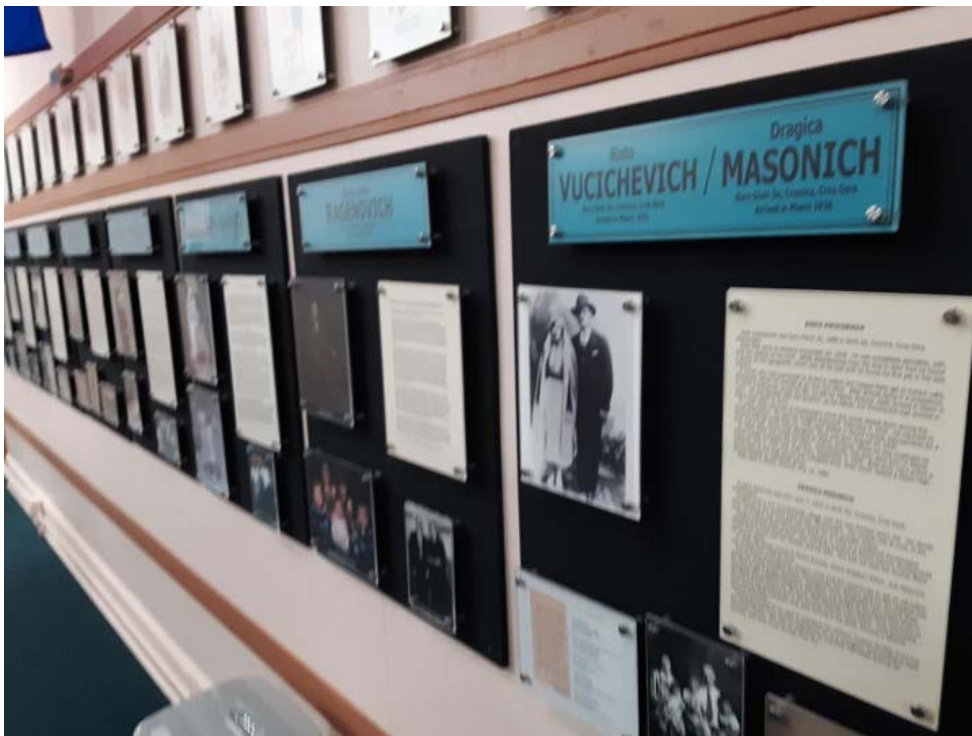


The Bullion Museum has a Small Collection of Local Historic and Prehistoric Native American Made Items



One of Several Apache Baskets on Display

Most of the Bullion Museum was devoted to historical items from the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Besides Anglo-Americans, two major ethnic groups that early settled in Miami were Mexicans and East European Slavic peoples. The museum has display sections about both groups.



Family Histories of Miami, Arizona, early Slavic Families



Field Trippers Strolling through the Slavic Section of the Bullion Center Museum



Decorated Slavic Cups and Bowl



Hand Embroidered Napkins from Slavic Family Settlers in Miami, Arizona



Boots and Saddles, Blacksmith Tools, Lantern, Washboards, Hand-Powered Wringer, the Old Days, and ...



On to the Electrical Age, with a Telephone Switchboard, with a Phone Dial, Before the Digital Age



Keyboarding with an early Manual Powered Typewriter, Back when Finger Buttons were Round



A Linotype Machine, for Preparing a Line of Print Characters from Molten Metal. These machines were used from the 1880s to the 1980s for typesetting for printing. The Digital Age of computers ended them



At one time there was a sort of entertainment pavilion near the Bullion Plaza that hosted all sorts of events, including live band dances. It no longer exists, gone without a trace.



The Military Section of the Bullion Plaza Center Museum has a collection of old military items mostly from the two World Wars of the 20th Century. These include rifles, kits, medical supplies, and uniforms. This muzzle-loading cannon is perhaps an earlier relic.



The most common items in the Military section are uniforms from different eras and different services, donated by local veterans.



There is a small Medical Section of the Bullion Museum adjacent to the Military Section. At the back of the photographer here is a Military Doctor's Kit of Medical Instruments. It was a neat assortment, but my photo of it was ruined due to reflections of overhead florescent lights on the glass case.

The McKusick Tile Works Section was temporarily crowded into a side room while its regular place was being mural painted in the same theme of Arizona birds and other animal, as well as plants and terrain.



The Field Trippers Encountered the Mural Artist at Work



The Mural Artist Readily Interacted with Field Trippers, Answering Questions and Explaining Things



The Mural Depicts a Panoramic View of Arizona, its Flora, and its Fauna, Above and Below Ground



The McKusick Tile Works Exhibit displays many of the tiles painted with images of Arizona Birds



A Few Tile Designs Did not Involve Arizona Birds

After the Bullion Plaza Museum visit, most of the Field Trippers adjourned to a restaurant a few blocks away down the street.





Nearby was the shell of an abandoned building that had been converted to a Street Art mural display, garden and rest area.

Here are the street addresses of the three historical cultural sites visited on this Field Trip ...

Besh Ba Gowah
1324 S Jesse Hayes Rd,
Globe, AZ 85501

Gila Pueblo
8274 6 Shooter Canyon Rd,
Globe, AZ 85501

Bullion Plaza Museum
150 N Plaza Circle
Miami, AZ 85539