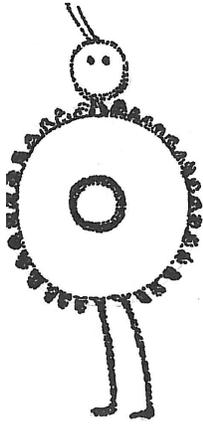


PETROGLYPHS AND PICTOGRAPHS

From prehistoric times up to the present Native Americans as well as peoples from all over the world have created designs on rock.

Archaeologists analyze these figures and designs, and often find that different groups of people made different styles of designs. The most common **petroglyphs** on Mesa Prieta are called “**Rio Grande Style**”. There have been few pictographs found on Mesa Prieta. While most of the petroglyphs found on Mesa Prieta are on basalt boulders, in other places petroglyphs are found carved into sandstone, volcanic ash and granite.



The meanings of the symbols are often mysterious and unknown. Some Native American tribes have ancient stories that tell about the designs and their meanings but sometimes those meanings have been forgotten.

Many native people believe that the spirit of the artist is connected with the work; therefore, petroglyphs and pictographs are sacred and must be treated with respect. We can all enjoy, appreciate and respect the designs that we find on the rocks.

WHO MADE THE PETROGLYPHS?

Paleo-Indian Period: 12,000 BC to 7,500 BC.

The earliest people who are known to have lived in the area of Mesa Prieta were hunters and gatherers. Spear points called Folsom points were found on Mesa Prieta. These people lived during the last ice age and were nomadic. They hunted large mammals such as giant bison and horses with spears and spear-throwers called atlatls.

Archaic Period: 7,500 BC to 600 AD.

It is believed that the Archaic people created the first petroglyphs on Mesa Prieta. They made mostly geometric designs such as circles, lines, diamonds, and other polygons. These patterns are often very difficult to see because of heavy re-patination.

Archaic people were nomadic hunters who used atlatls. They also gathered plants and roots to eat. By the end of this time period, the Archaic people were planting seeds and returning to their fields every so often to care for them. Residences from this time are what we call “pithouses,” semi-subterranean circular rooms with wooden rafters and either thatched or earthen roofs. These were accessed using a single circular hole in the ceiling and climbing down a ladder. Pithouses were likely used only part of the year, as people would hunt and forage over a large geographic area during summer and fall, returning to the same pithouses for winter each year.

Early Agricultural Peoples: 600 AD to 1300 AD.

As people began to grow more crops such as corn (maize), beans and squash, they saved the seeds to plant the next year. The food produced by agriculture allowed extended family groups to make permanent homes and some lived in small villages. The buildings from this time look much like the Archaic Period pithouses, but the advent of pottery in the area tells us people stayed in the same place longer.

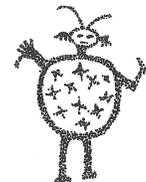


Corn (Maize)

Ancestral Pueblo Classic Period: 1300 AD to 1598 AD.

Ancestors of the modern Pueblo people lived in large pueblo villages and agriculture was very important in order to feed many people.

Most of the petroglyphs that we find on Mesa Prieta were made by these people. The designs were often of animals, people, shields, plants, and sky symbols. Many flute players were made during this time.



Postcontact Period: 1598 AD to about 50 years ago.

During this time period the petroglyphs were made by four different groups of people:



A variety of Christian crosses.

1. Pueblo
2. Spanish
3. Genísaros
4. Anglos

There are many petroglyphs of crosses and other religious symbols, horses and riders and Spanish lions that were made during this time.

Sheep herders made many of these petroglyphs while caring for their flocks as they grazed on the Mesa.



European-style heraldic lion

Modern Period: 1950* to the present.



Modern marking "7-16-50"

Markings made after 1950 might be a new image, a date, or a person's name or initials.

*per federal and state regulations, items and structures more than 50 years old can be considered "historic." This gives us a moving date for what is "modern," currently now at 1970.