

Report to the Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society on Jakob W. Sedig's Trip to Fife Lake, Michigan to Assess Archaeological Collections

This report details the trip I took to Fife Lake, Michigan from July 12-July 15, 2017 to assess archaeological collections from several sites in the upper Gila currently held by Patricia (Pat) Brunett. My trip was generously funded by an AAHS travel grant and very successful. I helped Pat inventory artifacts, maps, and field notes, and learned about the amount of material in the collections so that a plan for research and curation can be developed. Pat desires that the collections return to American Southwest and be curated at museums/research institutions there.

Background:

During the 1970s-1980s James Fitting of Case Western University conducted archaeological research in the upper Gila region of southwest New Mexico. One of Fitting's associates, Fel Brunett, of Fife Lake, Michigan, assisted with these excavations. Fel also led small projects in the upper Gila through the Chippewa Nature Center, a history/nature organization in northern Michigan. Artifacts, site notes, maps, and other materials from these projects were brought to Michigan, where they were to be analyzed and reported. However, analysis and reporting never occurred, and eventually the Fel stored the material at his residence. Fel passed away in December 2014 and since then I have been in communication with his wife, Pat, to help create a plan for what to do with the artifacts. While Fel was an RPA, Pat does not have an archaeological background and needed help determining what was in the collections. Below I detail some of the material I examined with her during my trip.

DeFausell:

By far, there was more material from the DeFausell site (LA 34779) than any other site in the Brunett collection. DeFausell is Classic Mimbres site on private land and was registered with New Mexico ARMS in 1972 by Fitting and the Case Western archaeological project. After talking with Pat and looking at the notes from DeFausell, it does not seem that DeFausell was extensively excavated by Fitting; instead, Fel Brunett would lead Chippewa Nature Center excursions to the site for a few weeks per year during the mid 1970s-1980s. During these excursions members of the Chippewa Nature Center had the opportunity to excavate the site and learn about the archaeological process. Additionally, I learned from Pat that one of the members of the CNC expeditions eventually bought property in Gila and would periodically excavate at DeFausell. I found correspondence between this member and Fel about the DeFausell artifacts and excavations with the DeFausell materials in Fife Lake.

As with all material in the Brunett collections, the DeFausell artifacts were stored in miscellaneous boxes, unsealed brown bags ("lunch bags"), or unsealed plastic bags ("sandwich bags"). To better preserve the artifacts, Pat and I transferred all the material to 4mm archival quality sealable plastic bags. Figure 1 is all the repackaged DeFausell material laid out on a table. The DeFausell collections consists of multiple bags of unwashed sherds and chipped stone, several manos and metates, multiple small bags of faunal material, some isolated diagnostic sherds (Mimbres Styles II and III), a few obsidian projectile points, botanical samples, and some miscellaneous artifacts (beads, quartz crystals, shell bracelet fragments, bone awls).

Based on the excavation notes and field maps in Fife Lake, it seems like there should be more material from the DeFausell excavations. However, it was not in Fife Lake, and I currently am unsure where these artifacts ended up. I plan to research where this material might be, and if it is curated in a research institution—if so, the DeFausell material in Fife Lake should be curated with that material. Pat mentioned to me that the property owners did keep some of the artifacts collected during excavation, particularly a bone awl with the proximal end carved into the shape of a ram's head, but I did not get the impression that the property owners kept a lot of the material (particularly bulk chipped stone/sherds).



Figure 1. Artifacts from DeFausell site in Fife Lake, Michigan



Figure 2. Bone Awls from DeFausell site



Figure 3. Diagnostic sherds from DeFausell



Figure 4. Projectile points from DeFausell

Rusty's Ruin:

Amongst the DeFausell material were artifacts and field notes labeled with the name “Rusty’s Ruin.” According to site maps and notes, Rusty’s Ruin is on the same property as the DeFausell site, and is in fact labeled with the same LA number (LA 34779). It seems that Rusty’s Ruin may have simply been a roomblock that was part of the DeFausell site, but I’m not entirely sure. While there is a thick file folder with field notes from Rusty’s Ruin, only a few artifacts from Rusty’s Ruin were in the collections (one mixed bag of artifacts, one diagnostic sherd, a palette, and a few projectile points). Encouragingly though, multiple bags of botanical material were found in the collections—hopefully these can be used to obtain dates for the site.



Fig 5. Projectile Points from Rusty’s Ruin



Fig 6. Rim sherd from Rusty’s Ruin



Fig 7. Palette from Rusty’s Ruin

Perishable Material from Cave Sites:

The most exciting find for me in Fife Lake was an extensive collection of perishable material from cave sites. Pat has no memory of these sites, as Fel collected the material before she knew him. Unfortunately, there is no information about the provenience of these artifacts, although we did find a USGS map with two dots on it labeled “cave.” These caves are off Turkey Creek road, not far north from the town of Gila. The perishable material consisted of dozens of reeds and

seemingly used as arrows. Many of these reeds had red or green paint on them, and some had binding.



Figure 8. Material from “cave sites” currently in Fife Lake



Figure 9. Painted sticks/reeds from “cave sites”



Figure 10. Reeds/arrows with binding from “cave sites”

Villareal I:

The only material from Villareal I were a set of complete bowls, small corrugated jars, a stone axe head, and a site map.



Figure 11. Bowls from Villareal I



Figure 12. Small corrugated jars from Villareal I

Miscellaneous Sites:

Along with the sites listed above, there were miscellaneous artifacts from a variety of sites throughout the Mimbres region and broader southwest. It seems that these artifacts were surface collected. No notes or proveniences were found with these artifacts.

- 1 small bag of sherds from Saige-McFarland
- 1 small bag of sherds labelled "near Red Rocks"
- 1 projectile point from "Elison property"
- 1 small bag of sherds from Fort West surface
- 1 small bag of sherds from Old Town
- 1 small bag of sherds from "Hookers Mountain"
- 1 small bag of unprovenienced Mimbres sherds
- 3 Projectile points from Billings Vista on Gila
- 1 sherd from Coronado Monument
- 1 small bag of sherds from Sacaton Ruin
- Projectile Points from Dominguez site on the Gila
- Small bags of sherds from "Tillie Hall"
- 1 small bag of sherds from Chaco Canyon
- 1 sherd from a "ceremonial site" beyond Reserve

Additionally, there were several complete Mimbres bowls that did not have any associated provenience information. These likely came from one of the sites Fitting/Brunett excavated on the Gila, especially DeFausell/Rusty's Ruin/Villareal I; hopefully the proveniences of these can be determined by examining field notes from these sites.



Figure 13. Unprovenienced jar that contained shell beads



Figure 14. Unprovenienced bowl



Figure 15. Unprovenienced ceramics vessels