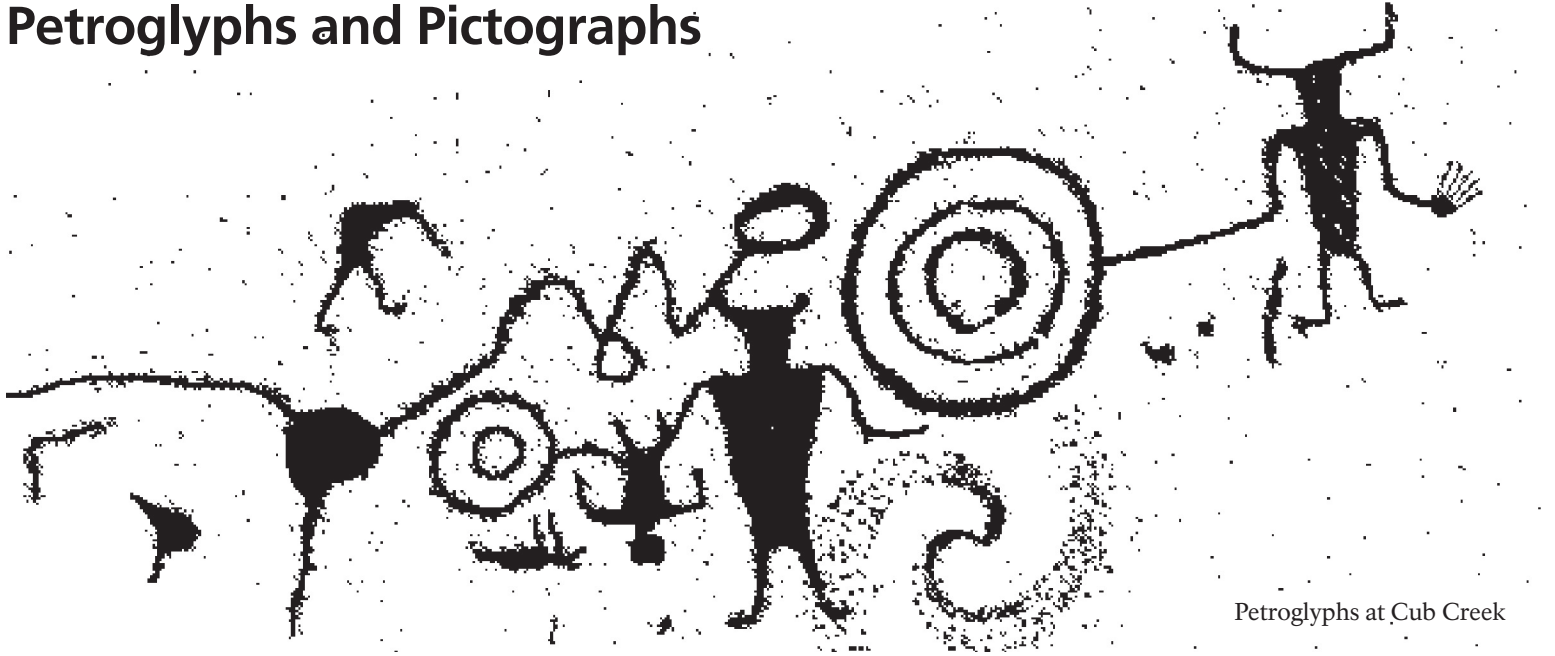




Petroglyphs and Pictographs



Petroglyphs at Cub Creek

About 1,000 years ago, the Fremont people lived in this area and left evidence of their presence in the form of petroglyphs and pictographs. Several areas in the monument allow visitors to easily access these designs and ponder the mystery of why they were created.

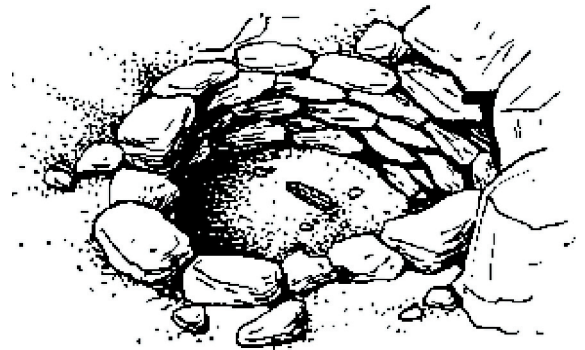
The Fremont Culture

Archaeologists first studied and named the Fremont culture along the Fremont River in south-central Utah and have since traced it through much of the Green and Colorado River drainages. The lifestyle of the Fremont people varied considerably throughout that area, reflecting the diverse environments that they inhabited. In general, they lived in small bands or family groups, grew crops to supplement native foods, and did not build large permanent dwellings.

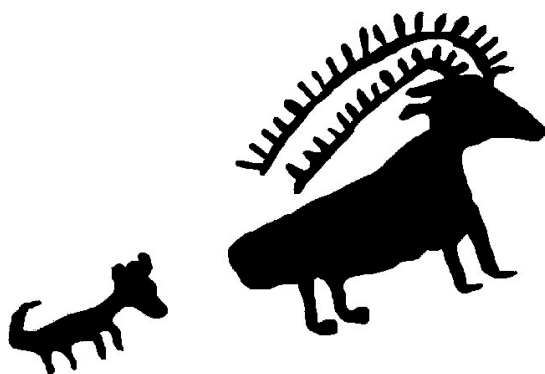
In the Dinosaur National Monument area, archaeological evidence of the Fremont dates from about 200 A.D. to about 1300 A.D. While few actual houses remain, known dwelling places ranged from natural shelters (such as rock overhangs or shallow caves) to small “villages” in open areas. Archeological evidence suggests many dwelling sites were occupied only seasonally, as the people moved into and out of an area according to the availability of water and food.

The Fremont relied heavily on native plant foods, such as piñon nuts, berries, and cactus fruits, and on wild game, including mule deer, bighorn sheep, smaller mammals, and birds. However, they also grew corn, beans, and squash, sometimes using irrigation techniques. This horticulture gave them, at least seasonally, a more settled life than a purely

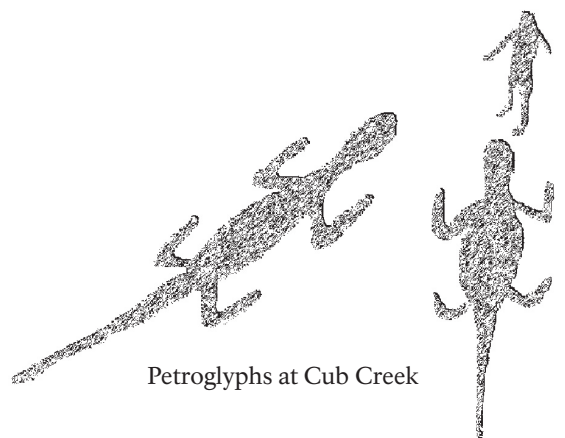
hunting-and-gathering existence, which in turn may have given them the time needed to create elaborate rock designs.



The fate of the Fremont culture is unclear. Recent theories suggest that the Fremont’s lifestyle may have changed resulting from drought or other climatic factors, dwindling natural resources, or the influence of other neighboring cultures. Whatever the case, it is difficult to trace the Fremont as a distinct culture in the archaeological record after about 1200 A.D., but the Fremont petroglyphs and pictographs survive as a vivid reminder of these ancient people.



Pictographs at Deluge Shelter



Petroglyphs at Cub Creek

Designs in the Rock

Fremont designs include both petroglyphs (patterns chipped or carved into the rock) and pictographs (patterns painted on the rock). Pictographs are relatively rare here, perhaps because they are more easily weathered. Some petroglyphs show traces of pigment, possibly indicating that many designs originally included both carved and painted areas. Many sandstone cliffs darkened with desert varnish, a naturally formed stain of iron and manganese oxides, provided an ideal canvas for carving petroglyphs. Most of these designs are outlines, but some are completely pecked to form solid figures, and a few consist of small holes in closely-spaced rows.

The style and content of Fremont designs vary throughout the region. The “Classic Vernal Style” predominates in Dinosaur National Monument. This style is characterized by human-like figures, animal-

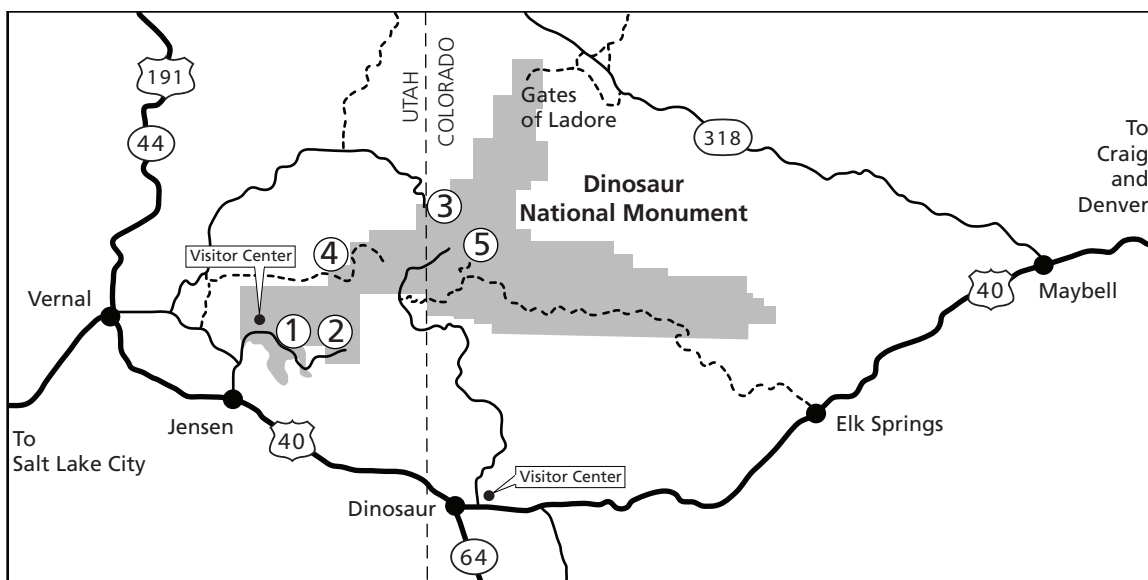
like figures, and abstract designs. Human figures typically have trapezoidal bodies, which may or may not include arms, legs, fingers, and toes. Elaborate decorations on the bodies suggest headdresses, earrings, necklaces, shields, or other objects. The animal figures include recognizable bighorn sheep, birds, snakes, and lizards, as well as more abstract animal-like shapes. Purely abstract or geometric designs, such as circles, spirals, and various combinations of lines, are common.

Why did the Fremont create these designs and what did they mean? Perhaps the designs served some ceremonial or religious purpose, related to hunting activities, identified clans, or simply expressed the artist’s imagination – or perhaps all or none of these. Attempts to interpret the designs by comparing them with recent Native American groups may provide clues, but the true meaning remains a mystery.

Viewing Designs

Many designs in the monument are fairly easy to access and allow up-close viewing. These designs are very fragile. Touching the petroglyphs and pictographs can damage the designs by leaving oils

behind that abrade the rock. Tracing and rubbings can damage the soft sandstone designs. For these reasons, please do not touch the designs.



1. Swelter Shelter

Easily accessed and only a mile from the visitor information station, near Jensen, Utah, Swelter Shelter displays a variety of both petroglyphs and pictographs designs.

2. Cub Creek

Another easily accessed site along the Tour of the Tilted Rocks auto route is the Cub Creek area. Petroglyph panels in this area feature a variety of typical Fremont designs, but are distinguished by several large lizard figures, not common at other sites.

3. Deluge Shelter

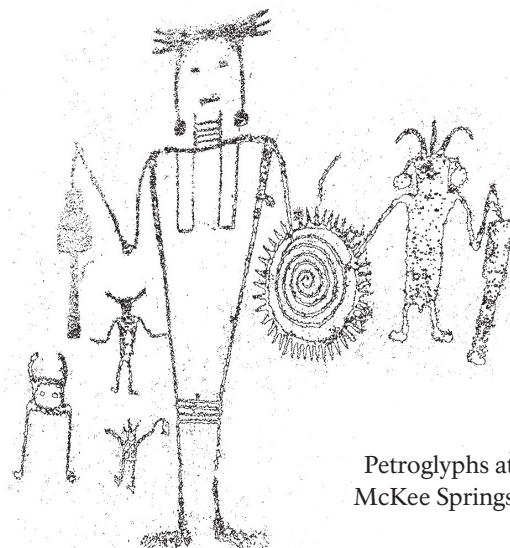
Pictographs and petroglyphs are found in Deluge Shelter, located along the Jones Hole Creek Trail. The shelter is approximately two miles from the trailhead.

4. McKee Springs

A more remote site, McKee Springs, near Rainbow Park, displays some of the finest large human-like designs in the area, as well as many other figures. Road is impassible during wet weather – check road conditions before attempting to drive to this site.

5. Pool Creek

Another remote site, Pool Creek, near Echo Park, includes a panel of unusual dot-pattern designs high above the creek. Road is impassible during wet weather – check road conditions before attempting to drive to this site.



Petroglyphs at McKee Springs