History of the New Mexico Annual Archaeology Fair

The New Mexico Annual Archaeology Fair is the Historic Preservation Division’s (HPD) public archaeology outreach. HPD is a state agency within the Department of Cultural Affairs, and it is the State Historic Preservation Office for New Mexico. Under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, a state historic preservation office is established in each state to carry out preservation-related tasks, including reviews of proposed projects under Section 106, nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, and tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic properties. HPD’s staff consists of professionals in the fields of history, archaeology, architecture, architectural history, and administrative and financial support staff. Visit www.nmhistoricpreservation.org for more information on HPD.

The Annual Archaeology Fair is a way for HPD to give back to the community, to provide opportunities for adults, students, and families to interact with archaeologists, learn more about archaeological methods and techniques, and archaeological sites across the state. Typical activities include making miniature clay pots, throwing atlatls, making bracelets from yucca, learning about ceramic analysis, flint knapping and lithic analysis, bone tools, etc.

HPD’s Archaeology Fair has been an annual event since 1992 - with a brief hiatus from 2009-2013. The first Archaeology Fair was held May 1992 at the Albuquerque Zoo as part of Heritage Preservation Month. From 1992-1995, the Fair was held in various places in May around Albuquerque. In May 1996, the Fair was held at Salmon Ruin in Bloomfield. May 10, 1997, saw the Fair back in Albuquerque at the Cottonwood mall. From 1997-2001, the Fair was held at multiple malls, the Mesilla Valley Mall in Las Cruces (1998), The Carlsbad Mall (1999), Winrock Mall in Albuquerque (2000), and the Villa Linda Mall in Santa Fe (2001). The Villa Linda Mall Archaeology Fair was my first Archaeology Fair.

Beginning in 2002, the Fair was held in the fall months, partly to take advantage of the fall weather, partly to celebrate International Archaeology Day. International Archaeology Day is the third Saturday in October and it is when the Archaeological Institute of America and organizations around the world present archaeological programs and activities to celebrate archaeology (International Archaeology Day - Archaeological Institute of America).

Beginning in 2002, the Archaeology Fair was held in city parks with the exception of the one held at the Tucumcari Historical Museum on September 19-20, 2003. The Fair was held October 5-6, 2002 at Gough Park in Silver City, at Pioneer Park in Aztec (September 10-11, 2004), at Central Park in Artesia (November 4-5, 2005), at Centennial Park in Clayton (September 15-16, 2006), at City Hall Park in Grants (October 12-13, 2007), and finally at City Park in Los Lunas (September 26-27, 2008).

HPD took a hiatus from holding the Annual Archaeology Fair from 2009-2013 but participated at Fiesta of Cultures at Coronado State Monument on October 19, 2013, and again in 2015. In 2014, the Fair was held at Ralph Edwards Park in Truth or Consequences on October 4th. HPD
then co-hosted the fair with the Bureau of Land Management at Drippings Springs in Las Cruces from May 6-7, 2016.

From 2017-2019 the Fair was held in October at Millicent Rogers Museum in Taos, at Jemez Historic Site in Jemez Springs, and at Blackwater Draw National Historic Landmark in Portales. Because of the COVID19 pandemic HPD was forced to hold a virtual archaeology Fair in 2020. Although the pandemic is waning, we decided to hold a virtual fair again this year.

Starting on Saturday, October 16, 2021, visit our Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/nmhistoricpreservation/] to view different videos, publications, and other information pertaining to Archaeology. You can also view the information on our website at New Mexico Historic Preservation Division | Archaeology Fair [nmhistoricpreservation.org].

Fair goers at Central Park in Artesia November 2005
Flintknappers at Central Park in Artesia 2005

Exhibit at the 2007 Archaeology Fair in Grants showing the tools archaeologists use
Archaeology Fair at Ralph Edwards Park in Truth or Consequences on October 4, 2014

HPD’s Bridget Barela and Bob Estes show how to make pinch pots at Millicent Rogers Museum, Taos 2017
HPD Archaeologist Andrew Zink demonstrating how to throw an atlatl at Jemez Historic Site, 2018

Jemez Historic Site Manager Matt Barbour and volunteers excavating in a roomblock at Jemez Historic Site, 2018