

**Animas–La Plata Project:  
Volume XVI – Final Synthetic Report**

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## Chapter 13: The Community

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More than a half century ago, Murdock (1949) defined a community as the location of regular face-to-face social interaction. Adhering to this notion, archaeologists often use settlement propinquity to define the community. Indeed, settlement clustering is a key element of what Lipe (1992) terms first-order, face-to-face communities, first-order referring to local residential communities that are small enough for regular interaction among people who are physically co-present (Varien 1999:19–23). Co-presence and regular interaction, however, do not in themselves produce community (Varien and Potter 2008:3). Indeed, communities may not even be the naturally bounded and well-integrated social entities they have been assumed to be (e.g., Isbell’s [2000] so-called “natural communities”). Recently, scholars have challenged the notion that communities are homogeneous, bounded social units in which members share a collective consciousness. Instead, communities are seen as being inhabited by diverse social actors who regularly exercise their agency; they are potentially volatile places where social relations are contested; and they are inextricably connected to the larger outside world (Isbell 2000:246–248).

Nevertheless, for comparative purposes, it is useful to delineate a social unit approximating the natural community based on settlement propinquity, but this community is not assumed to be either well integrated or internally homogeneous. Therefore, for analytical purposes, a community is considered the largest definable group in which people are physically co-present and

regularly interact. Communities, because they are based on frequent face-to-face interaction, also offer their members a sense of belonging and, therefore, a sense of shared identity (Varien and Potter 2008). In Ridges Basin, given its scale and the proximity of sites within it, members of various settlement clusters undoubtedly interacted on a daily basis, and therefore the community is assumed to have been larger than any single settlement cluster (see Chapter 11, Settlement Clusters). Instead, it appears the community was dispersed throughout the basin, and maybe even beyond the basin, and consisted of clusters of households surrounding one village, the Sacred Ridge site (5LP245).

Beyond that, though, the spatial configuration of the Ridge Basin community is nebulous. For example, was nearby Blue Mesa a separate contemporaneously occupied community, or was it part of the Ridges Basin community? There are a number of reasons to consider these two as separate communities. First, there is a recognizable space between them and natural borders around each based on the major land forms they occupied—Ridges Basin and Blue Mesa (see Figure 8.8). These spatial divisions would have affected the social interaction of community members on a daily basis and, as a result, potentially the sense of belonging and identity that comes with such interaction. Second, both communities were sizable enough to be economically and reproductively self-sufficient. By A.D. 800, each contained about 200–300 people (see Chapter 8, Pueblo I Chronology and Population).

Thus, there was no functional necessity for them to have operated as a single large community. And third, they were organized very differently. Within Ridges Basin, settlements were dispersed over a relatively wide area and included a village with ritual architecture. On Blue Mesa, settlement was far more aggregated overall, was more tightly bounded spatially, consisted of long rows of habitation sites (see Figure 11.20), and did not contain a dominant site with ritual facilities like the Sacred Ridge site. If the two locales were part of the same community, it would be expected that they would be more similar in their organization. Instead, members of each apparently had different ideas about how to organize their settlements.

On the other hand, similarities between the Eastern Cluster (in Ridges Basin) and Blue Mesa in lithic assemblage and redware clay composition have prompted analysts to suggest fairly intensive interaction between these two locales and a corresponding lack of interaction between these locales and Sacred Ridge (see Allison 2010; Railey 2009d; Chapter 12, Settlement Cluster Variation). These patterns suggest that the Eastern Cluster and Blue Mesa shared a social identity distinct from Sacred Ridge, and are consistent with Hegmon's (2002) contention that even when communities are present, "individuals may maintain multiple identities and memberships that become active in varying social and temporal contexts" (Schachner 2008:173). Furthermore, the relatively dispersed nature of the Ridges Basin community and the high frequency of enclosures around houses, even at the Sacred Ridge site, would have hindered daily social interaction among households and made accidental encounters with neighbors unlikely (Allison 2008:52). These factors undoubtedly played a role in how cohesive and integrated the community was made the boundaries within and around the community that much more ambiguous. This is especially the case when compared to early communities to the west of the La Plata River, such Alkali Ridge Site 13 (see below).

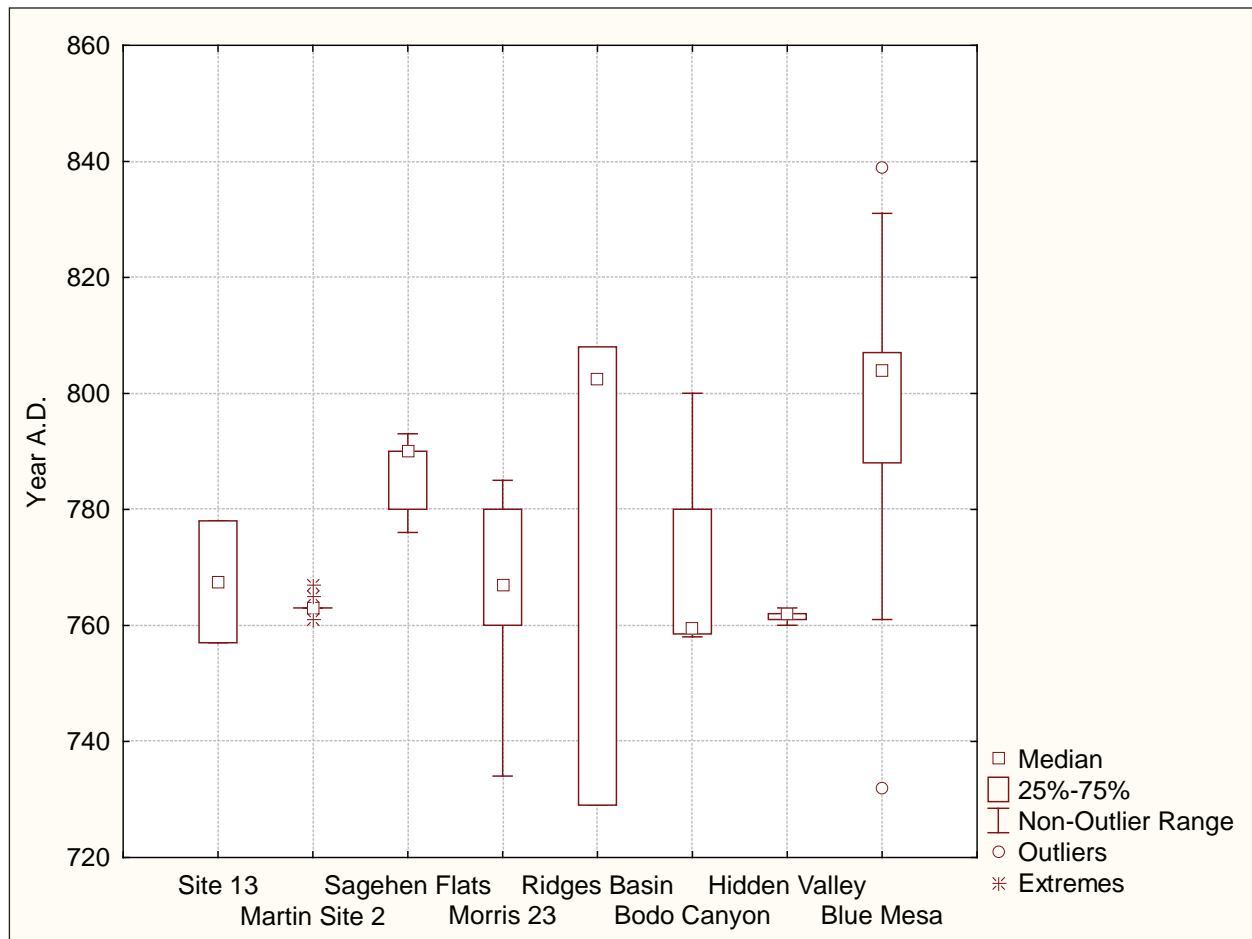
In summary, Pueblo I settlements in Ridges Basin and on Blue Mesa may be considered two distinct communities based on settlement propinquity, size, and organizational differences. But ceramic and lithic data from Blue Mesa and portions of Ridges Basin (i.e., the Eastern Cluster) suggest that community members maintained multiple identities and memberships and actively engaged the outside world, and that any boundaries around these groupings, if present, were quite permeable.

## EARLY PUEBLO I COMMUNITIES IN THE NORTHERN SOUTHWEST

This section briefly describes and compares early Pueblo I communities in the Northern San Juan region. The focus is on those communities that were occupied between A.D. 750 and 825. Eight communities from the Northern San Juan region have produced cutting dates within this interval, including Ridges Basin and Blue Mesa (Figure 13.1). From west to east these communities are Alkali Ridge Site 13, Martin's Site 2, Sagehen Flats, Morris 23, Ridges Basin, Bodo Canyon, Hidden Valley, and Blue Mesa (Figure 13.2). Additional communities with non-cutting dates in the A.D. 700s include Grass Mesa Village (Lipe et al. 1988), Badger House (Hayes and Lancaster 1975), and the Frances Mesa community (Sesler and Hovezak 2002:193). Additionally, sites excavated as part of the Navajo Reservoir project are discussed where appropriate (Eddy 1966).

### Bluff, Piedra, and Rosa Areas

Much of the variation evident among these communities is related to larger patterns of variation noted across the northern Southwest in the Pueblo I period. For example, archaeologists have noted three distinct pottery traditions across the Northern San Juan region in the eighth and ninth centuries. Wilshusen (1999b) and Wilshusen and Ortman (1999) documented three centers of pottery production at approximately A.D. 840 (Figure 13.3), which they labeled the Bluff, Piedra,



**Figure 13.1.** Box and whisker plots of cutting dates from early Pueblo I communities from across the northern Southwest.

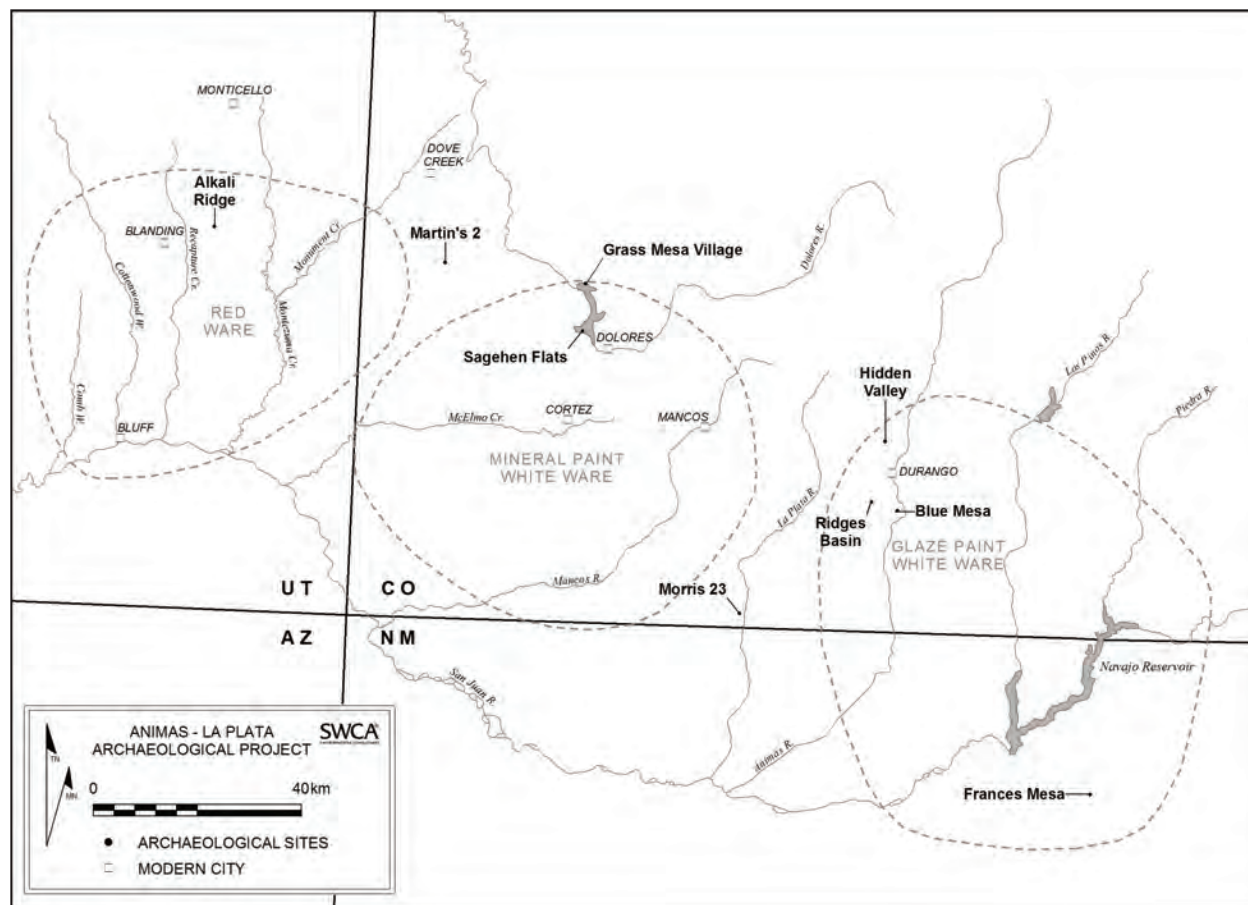
and Rosa areas. Allison (2008) notes that comparable ceramic technological-style zones are recognizable at least as early as the late eighth century. He identifies them as redware, mineral-painted whiteware, and glaze-painted whiteware, and these closely correspond to Wilshusen's and Ortman's centers of production (see Figure 13.2).

In the western part of the region, most of the decorated pottery was redware. To the east, whiteware was more common, with mineral-painted whiteware predominating from the McElmo Creek drainage to about the La Plata River, and glaze-painted whiteware from the Animas River drainage east. These ceramic technological-style zones correspond with differences in pottery design styles, architecture, settlement

patterns, and site layouts, suggesting that groups with distinct social identities occupied different areas in early Pueblo I times (Allison 2008:47). The following describes early Pueblo I communities in the Northern San Juan region from east to west, starting in the so-called Bluff area and ending in the Rosa area.

### Alkali Ridge Site 13 and Martin's Site 2

Settlement layout in the west is exemplified by two sites, Alkali Ridge Site 13 and Martin's Site 2 (Figure 13.4). Both sites contain long rows of surface rooms delineating plaza areas that contain pit structures. Site 13 contains 16–20 pit structures and hundreds of contiguous, doubled-row surface rooms assembled around open plazas (Figure 13.4). Brew (1946:190) interpreted the larger front rooms as living quarters



**Figure 13.2.** Map of early Pueblo I sites and locales in the Northern San Juan region. Approximate limits of early Pueblo I pottery traditions are demarcated by dashed lines (adapted from Allison 2008:Figure 3.1).

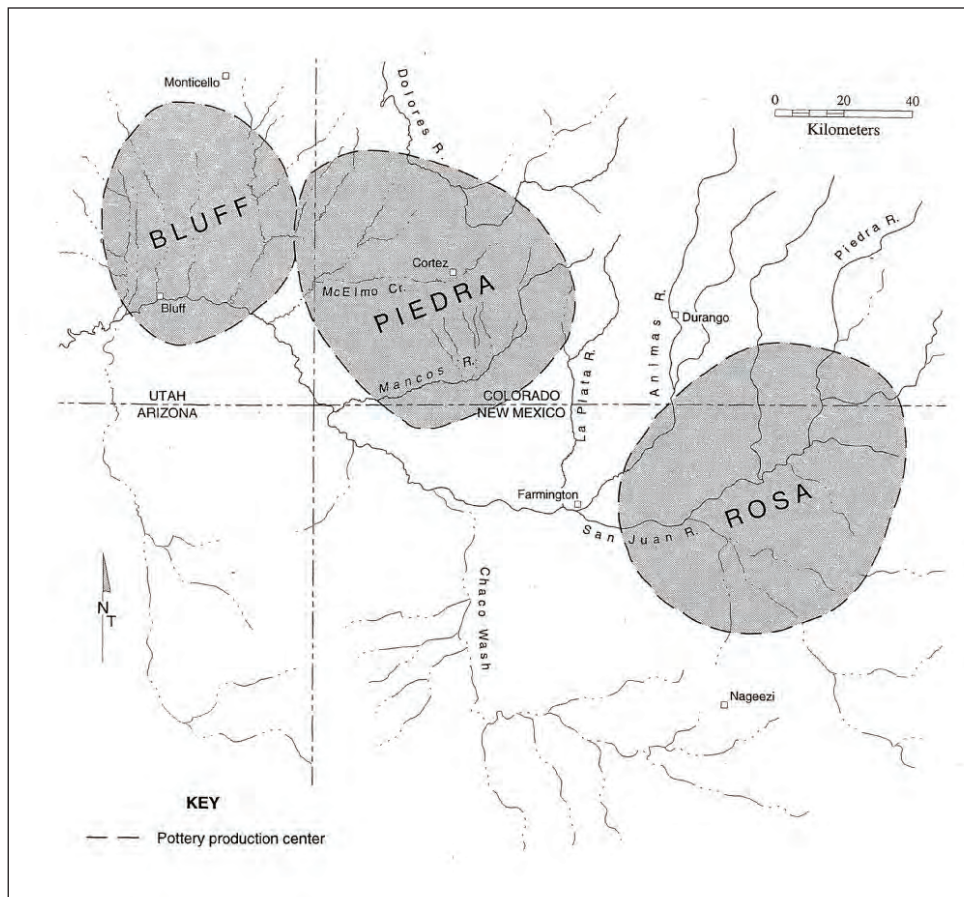
and the small back rooms as storage chambers. Additionally, at both sites there is a general north-south trend to the organization wherein surface rooms are located to the north of the pit structure.

Pit structure shapes are highly variable at Site 13. Square, circular, and D shapes are represented (Figure 13.5). Antechambers in the fronts of structures are present in several of the structures, but most ventilators are one-hole openings. The presence of benches, stringer posts, and coped hearths is also variable among structures at Site 13. Some of the variation exhibited by these structures may relate to functional differences. Brew (1946:157) interpreted the large circular structures, such as Pit House E in Figure 13.5, as ritual structures analogous to great kivas. Chuipka (2008b:131) notes, however, that the largest structure at this site is only 9 m

in diameter “and is better classified as an oversized pit structure rather than a great kiva.”

Allison (2008:49) reports, based on room block length, that Site 13 comprised 40–45 households, which he suggests translates roughly to a population of 200–250 people (assuming 5.5 people per household). If one uses a range of 5–8 people per household (see Chapter 8), a population range of 200–320 is generated. There are no known contemporaneous sites around Site 13, and this large, nucleated village therefore appears to compose the entire community. Martin’s Site 2 comprised approximately 15–18 households and a population of 80–100 people (Allison 2008:49). The short occupation span of these settlements suggests that most of the structures at each of these sites were occupied contemporaneously (see Figure 13.1).





**Figure 13.3.** Ceramic production centers, circa A.D. 840 (reproduced from Wilshusen 1999b:Figure 7-4).

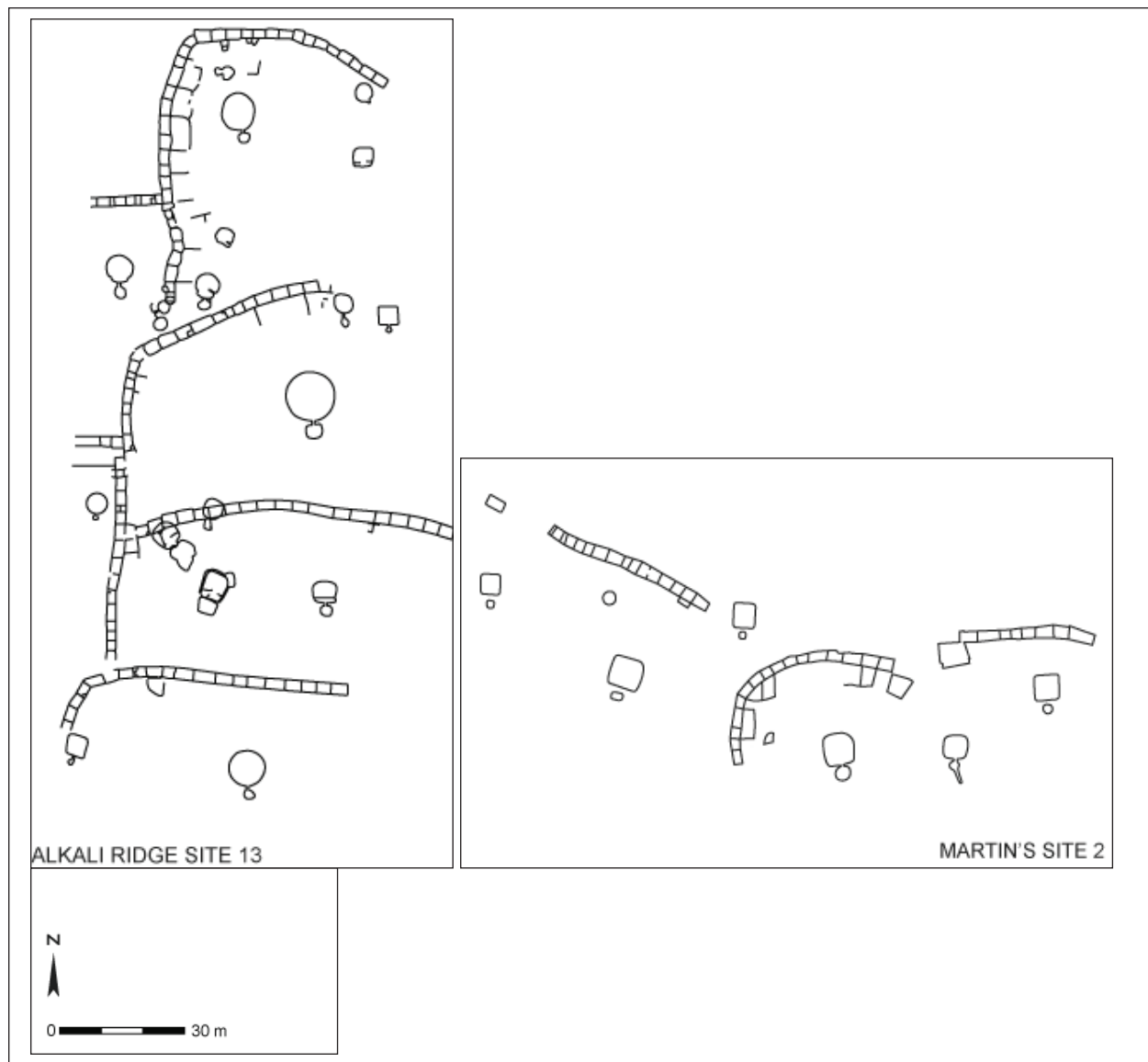
Allison also notes that at Site 13 people occupying aboveground domestic rooms shared walls with their neighbors and almost certainly had frequent unplanned interactions due to the closely spaced room entrances. He suggests that, unlike at Ridges Basin sites, it would have been difficult to avoid the inhabitants of nearby rooms, and accidental encounters with neighbors must have been relatively common at Site 13 (Allison 2008:52).

### Sagehen Flats and Grass Mesa Village

Early Pueblo I communities in the Piedra area were less nucleated than those in the Bluff area and much more architecturally homogeneous. The Piedra area typically contains sites with square or rectangular pit structures with wing walls and single-hole ventilators. Surface room architecture tends to be more substantial

than in the eastern region but not as contiguous as in the west; that is, room blocks are much shorter and do not define large plazas as they do at Alkali Ridge Site 13. As in the western settlements, though, blocks of surface rooms are typically two rooms deep and are both storage and living rooms. Organizationally, the major features in the Piedra area tend to be formally oriented north–south, with surface rooms to the north of the pit structure and a midden to the south.

The Sagehen Flats community exemplifies early Pueblo I communities in the Piedra area. Sagehen Flats was an open, flat, bottomlands area west of the Dolores River. From about A.D. 750 to 850, Sagehen Flats was occupied by a community of dispersed hamlets, several of which were excavated during the Dolores Archaeological Program, including five sites with

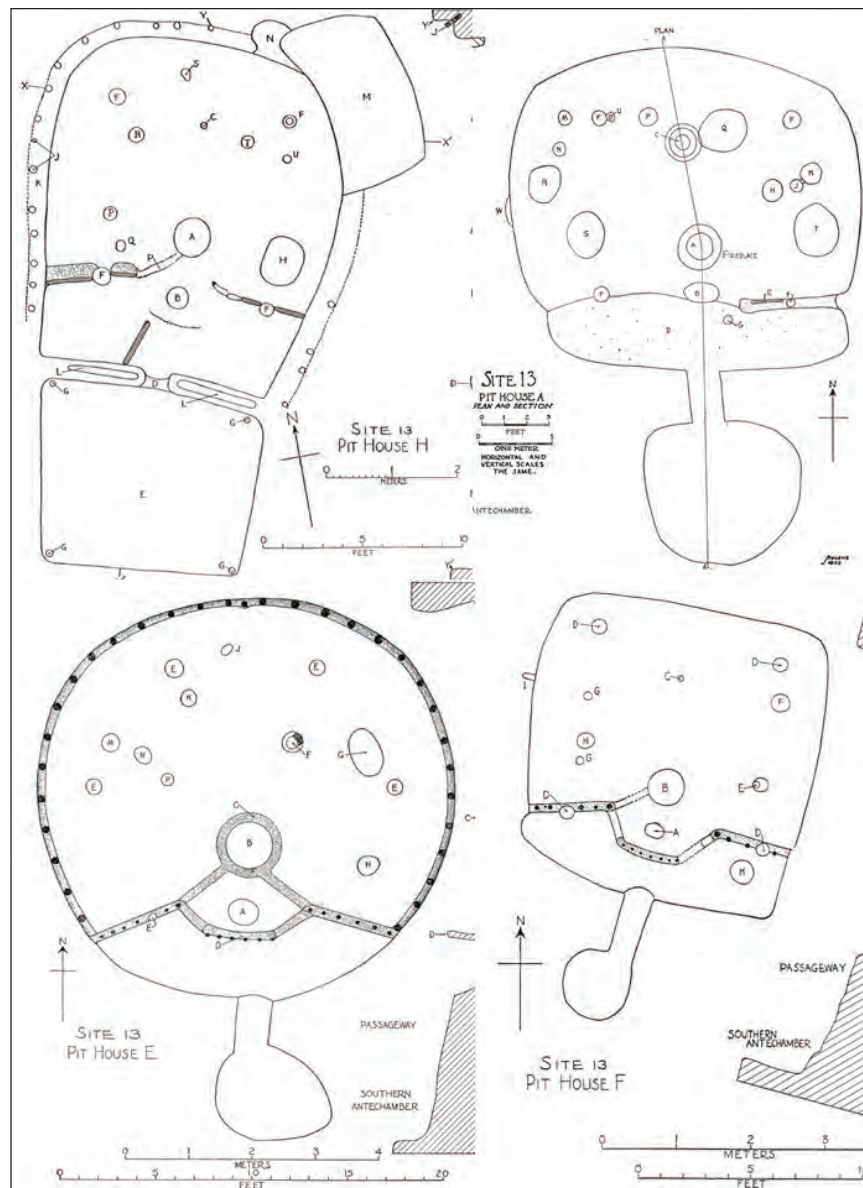


**Figure 13.4.** Plan maps of Alkali Ridge Site 13 and Martin's Site 2 (after Allison 2008:Figure 3.2).

tree-ring dates in the late eighth century: Dos Casas Hamlet, Windy Wheat Hamlet, Hamlet de la Olla, Rusty Ridge Hamlet, and Pit Structure 1 at Rio Vista Village (Brisbin 1986; Brisbin et al. 1986; Etzkorn 1986; Fields and Nelson 1986; Hewitt 1986) (see Figure 13.2). Dos Casas Hamlet is a typical Sagehen Flats site containing two sequentially occupied, square pit structures and several surface rooms (Figure 13.6).

The Sagehen Flats locality contained at least 10 hamlets that dated to the eighth century (Kane et

al. 1986:Table 1.7). Most of these sites had one pit structure and represented a single household. Sites with two pit structures, such as Dos Casas Hamlet, most often also represented a single household because the structures were sequentially occupied (Figure 13.6). Windy Wheat Hamlet, with three structures, may have contained two households at one time. These figures generate an estimated 11 households composing the community, or a population estimate of approximately 60–100 people.

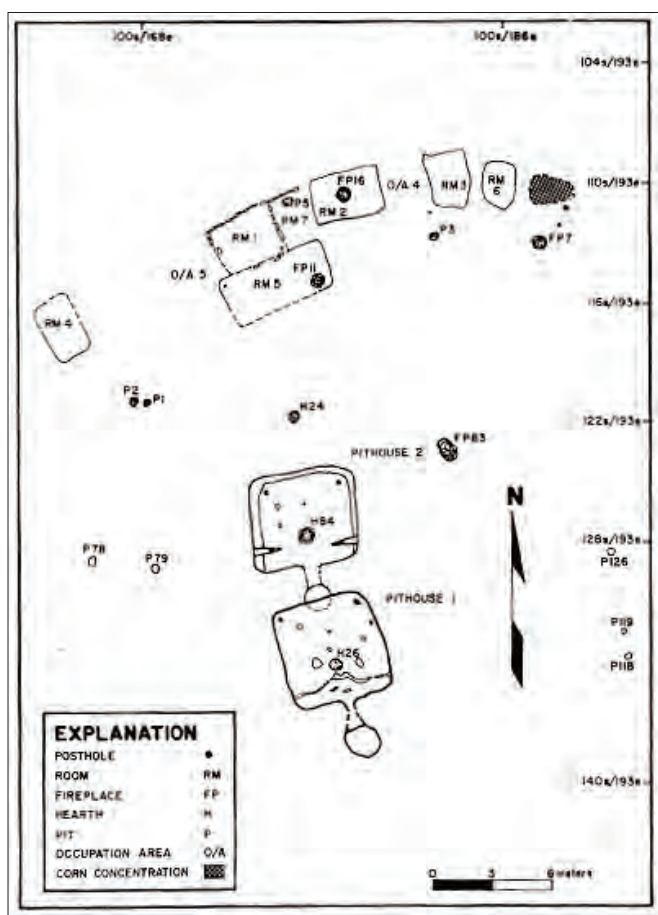


**Figure 13.5.** Plan views of select pit structures at Alkali Ridge Site 13 (not to scale).

There is no obvious communal ritual architecture associated with the Sagehen Flats community. However, the Grass Mesa Village community, also occupied in the early Pueblo I period (A.D. 700–850), had an oversized pit structure (PS 93) associated with the phase of occupation dating from 700 to 780 and a great kiva (PS 7) associated with the occupation dating from 780 to 850 (Lipe et al. 1988:617, 1221) (Figure 13.7). This early Pueblo I

community comprised at least 28 pit structures, about half of which dated from A.D. 700 to 780 and half of which dated from 780 to 840. Surface architecture comprised only two or three rooms in a single row and was less formally arranged than the Sagehen Flats community. The Grass Mesa Village community, however, was more highly aggregated than the Sagehen Flats community and contained from 60 to 100 people at any one time.





**Figure 13.6.** Plan map of Dos Casas Hamlet (reproduced from Brisbin et al. 1986:Figure 8.10).

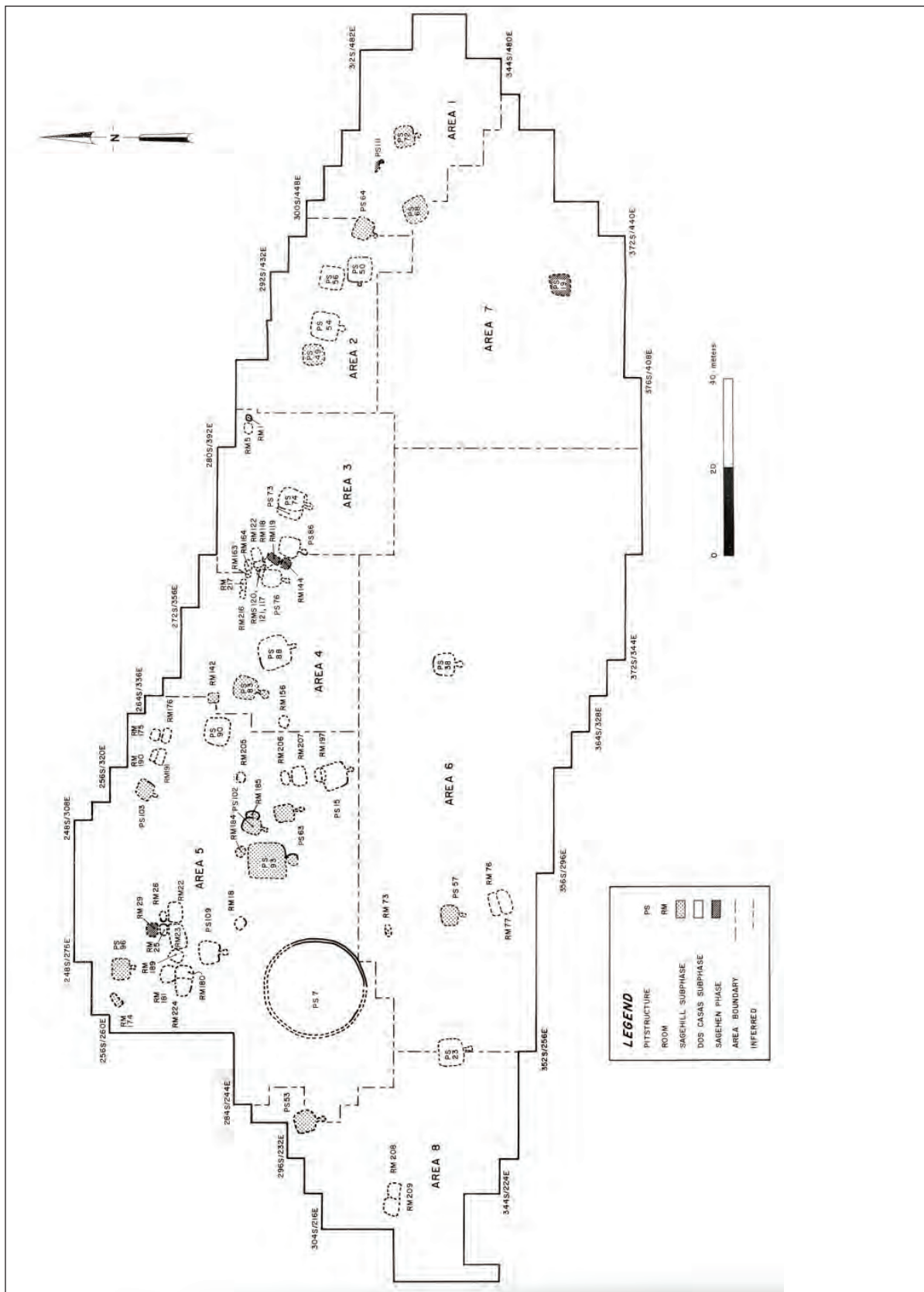
## Morris 23

Dating to the eighth century, Morris 23 is a large site in the La Plata River drainage between the Piedra and Rosa areas. The site comprises 51 pit structures and a great kiva (Figure 13.8) (Chuiпка 2008b:114). These structures are organized into 28 discrete habitation units, each of which generally comprises at least one pit structure, associated surface architecture, and midden (Chuiпка 2008b:114–115).

In 1927 Morris excavated five habitation units, which he referred to as Buildings I–IV and Protokiva 7. These are the only excavations of structures to have occurred at the site, although Chuiпка mapped the site and conducted some limited auger testing across the site in 2007 (Chuiпка 2008b). The pit structures excavated by

Morris were square (Figures 13.9) and consistently had coped hearths, wing walls, and a four-post roof support system in the floor (see also Figure 6.3). A full bench was present in one of the structures (see Figure 6.3). Surface rooms were arranged in contiguous room blocks two rooms deep, and the orientation of the structures was north–south. These attributes are most similar to sites in the Piedra and Bluff areas to the west.

In contrast to the site’s architectural attributes, the ceramic assemblage of Morris 23 is similar to assemblages seen on Rosa sites. According to Chuiпка’s in-field analysis (2008b:120–123), there is a near absence of redware, and decorated pots are most frequently of the Chapin/Lino and Rosa Black-on-white types. Piedra Black-on-white and neck-banded grayware sherds were also present but rare.



**Figure 13.7.** Plan map of Grass Mesa Village, A.D. 700–840 (reproduced from Lipe et al. 1988:Figure 18.1).

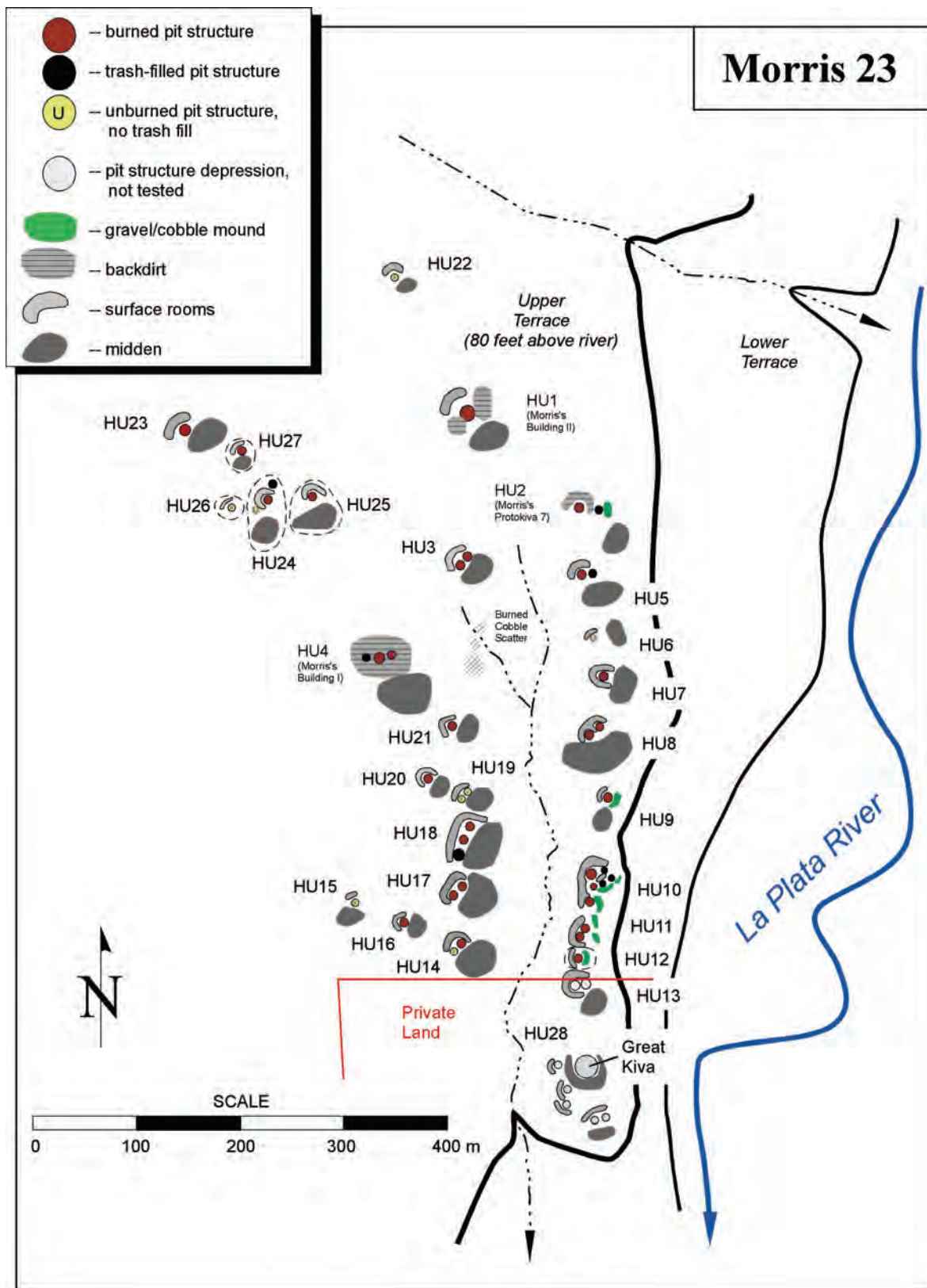
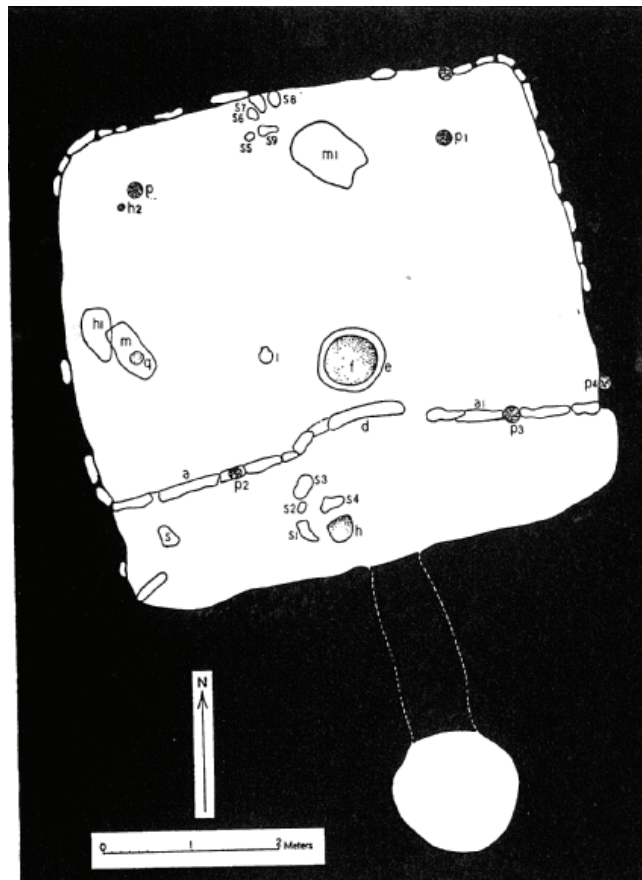


Figure 13.8. Plan map of Morris 23 (reproduced from Chuipka 2008b:Figure 5-8).



**Figure 13.9.** Plan map of Morris's Protokiva 7 (reproduced from Morris 1939:Figure 17).

Morris 23 was similar to Grass Mesa Village in its level of aggregation; it was not as highly aggregated as Alkali Ridge Site 13 but more aggregated than the Sagehen Flats community. And, like Grass Mesa, it has a great kiva. Chuipka (2008b:114–118) notes the sequential occupation of pit structures on the site and suggests that the latest occupation comprised 29 pit structures. This generates a momentary population estimate of 150–230 people.

### Hidden Valley

Just north of the modern city of Durango is an early Pueblo I community called Hidden Valley (Figure 13.10). This community dates to the A.D. 760s and comprises approximately 20 single-pit structure habitations. Like Morris 23, it is considered to be between and outside of both the Piedra and Rosa

areas (see Figure 13.3). Unlike Morris 23, houses in this community are widely dispersed, round in plan, and have a six-post cribbed roof, ventilator entryways, and cobble rings enclosing them (Figure 13.11). Additionally, surface rooms are few, small, and compose room blocks only one row deep, and the orientation of the architectural features is variable, making them similar in composition and layout to early Pueblo I sites in the Rosa area.

There is no evidence of sequential occupation in this short-lived community. None of the excavated structures were salvaged, and all had been burned at abandonment. Additionally, tree-ring dates cluster tightly at A.D. 760 and 761. If all 20 structures were occupied simultaneously, the estimated population of the community would be 100–160 people.



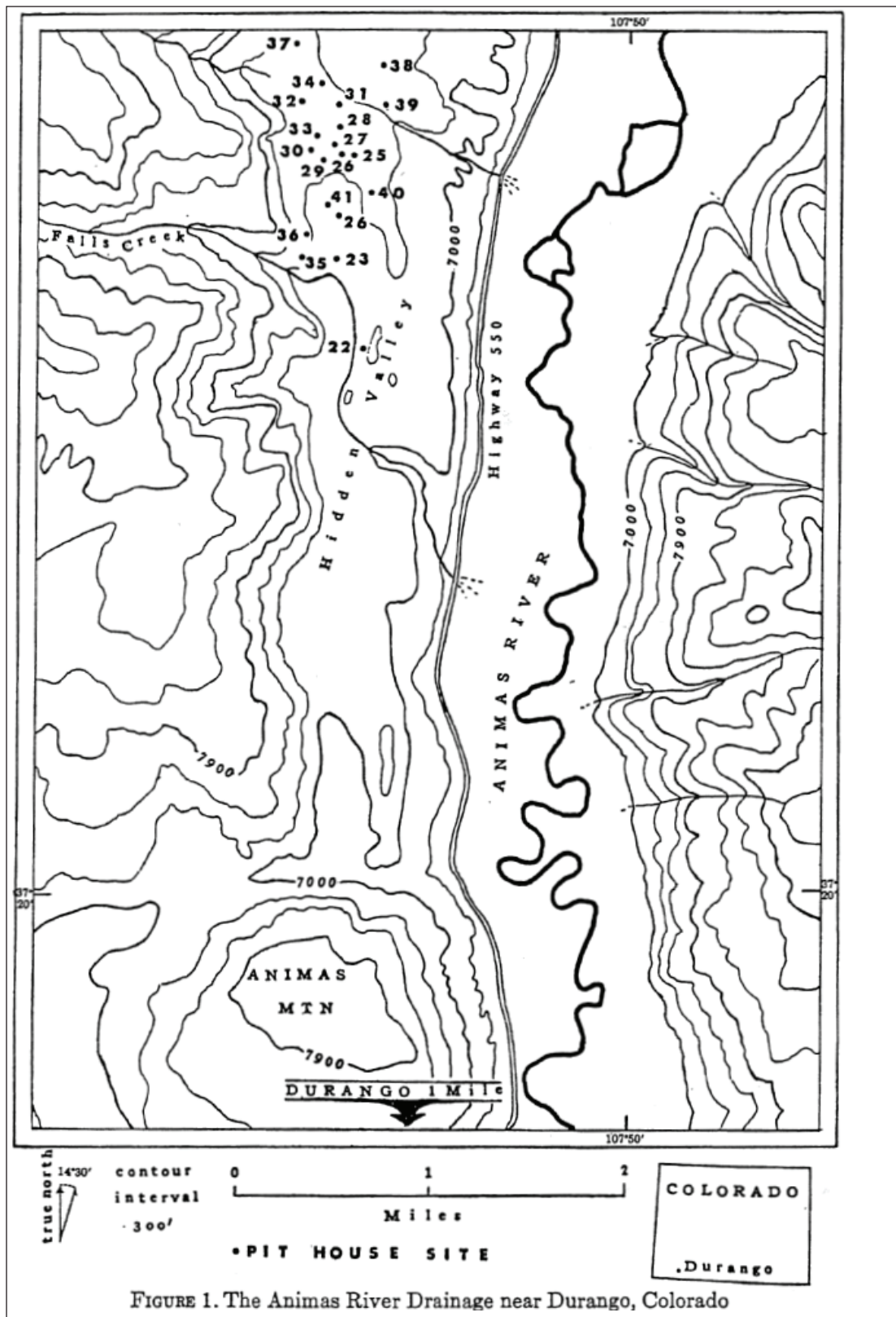


Figure 13.10. Map of the Hidden Valley community (reproduced from Carlson 1963:Figure 1).



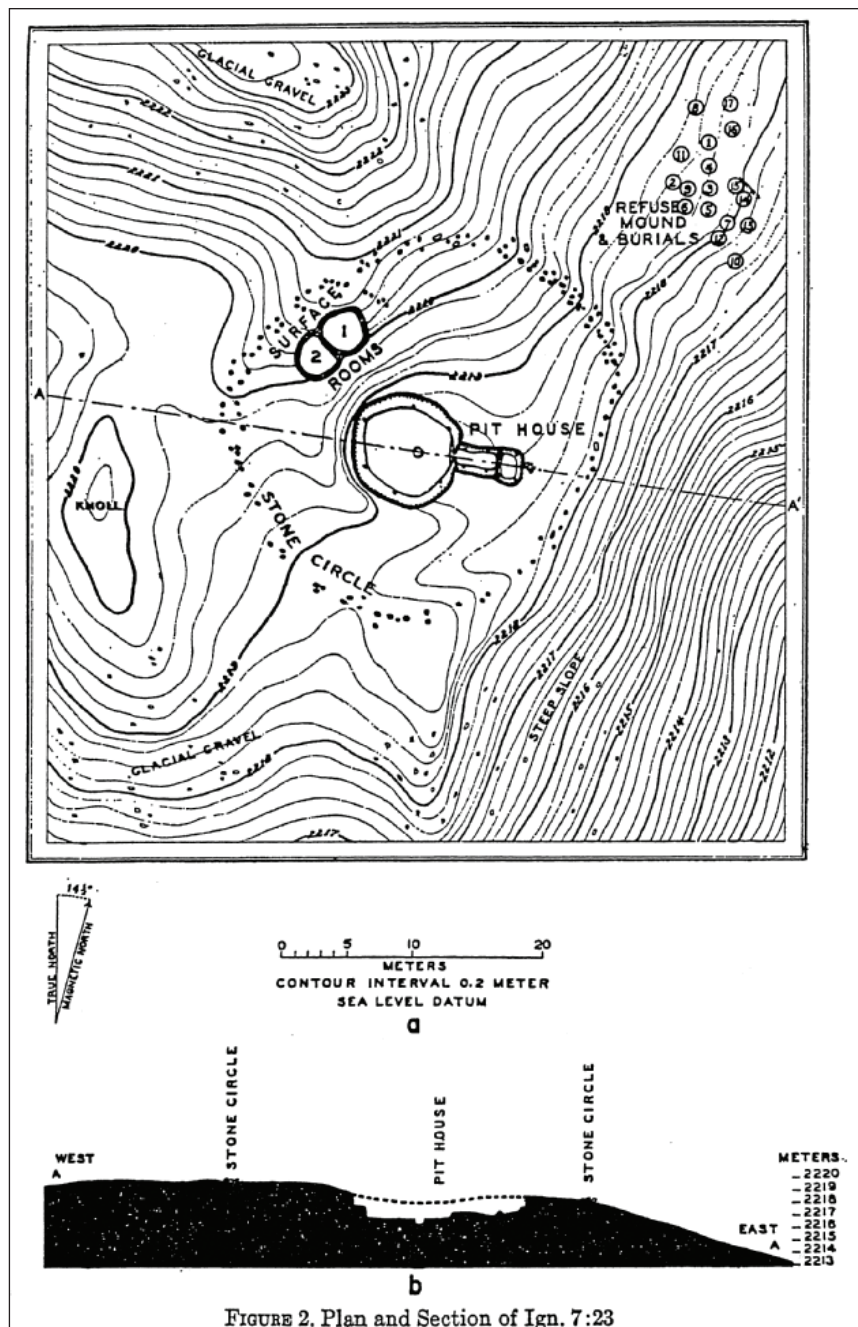


FIGURE 2. Plan and Section of Ign. 7:23

Figure 13.11. Plan map of Ign 7:23, part of the Hidden Valley community (reproduced from Carlson 1963:Figure 2).

## Blue Mesa

Chapter 11 summarizes SWCA's work on Blue Mesa and briefly describes the findings there. This community dates from about A.D. 760 to as late as 840 (see Figure 13.1), although Chuipka and Potter (2007b) suggest

that the late dates from 5LP239 are from a limited reoccupation of that site rather than continued occupation of the mesa. The community contained approximately 74 pit structures, some of which were sequentially occupied. Chuipka and Potter (2007b:243) estimate a momentary population level between 125 and 300 people.



One of the largest Rosa communities, the Frances Mesa community, contained 22 single-residence Rosa phase habitation sites and eight multiple residence sites containing a total of 44 pit structures (Sesler and Hovezak 2002:192–193). These sites were widely dispersed across Frances Mesa with no apparent communal ritual structures present. Sesler and Hovezak note that approximately half the structures are unburned and might represent salvaged structures. This suggests the sequential occupation of at least some of the structures, perhaps half, and a momentary population of about 100–175 people.

## COMPARING RIDGES BASIN

Compared to other early Pueblo I communities, the Ridges Basin community is unique in four obvious ways: population size, spatial size, architectural heterogeneity, and layout and organization. In terms of population size, Ridges Basin and Blue Mesa—adjacent to each other—are two of the largest documented eighth-century communities in the Northern San Juan region (Figure 13.13)<sup>1</sup>. All other early Pueblo I communities, such as Alkali Ridge Site 13, were relatively isolated. Thus, the Ridges Basin–Blue Mesa area saw the highest local population densities in the northern Southwest in the eighth and ninth centuries. This undoubtedly affected both access to and competition for local resources and the social interactions that are involved in such competition.

Second, the Ridges Basin and Frances Mesa communities were, by several orders of magnitude, the most dispersed and spatially extensive early Pueblo I communities (Figure 13.14). Likewise, the overall density of pit structures within early Pueblo I communities is variable, with Ridges Basin being one of the least densely occupied (Figure 13.15). These factors have direct implications for the consistency and

frequency of daily interaction of community members and, as Allison (2008) has pointed out, the frequency of accidental encounters with neighbors. Moreover, the relatively high frequency of enclosures in the Ridges Basin community would have maximized the seclusion of individual households, even in the face of aggregation (i.e., at Sacred Ridge). All of these factors would have affected the frequency of face-to-face interactions and ultimately the level of community integration.

Third, Ridges Basin is the only early Pueblo I community to consist of a small village and dispersed settlement clusters. Houses in other communities were distributed much more evenly across space. With the exception of Ridges Basin, in no instance were there both a highly aggregated settlement and numerous dispersed settlements present in a single community. Communities were either highly nucleated, such as Alkali Ridge; highly dispersed, such as Sagehen Flats, Hidden Valley, and Frances Mesa; or somewhere in between, as in the cases of Morris 23, Blue Mesa, and Grass Mesa Village. Extreme spatial unevenness is unique to the Ridges Basin community.

Finally, the Ridges Basin community is the most architecturally heterogeneous early Pueblo I community in the northern Southwest. Alkali Ridge Site 13 and Blue Mesa, indeed, contain a variety of pit structure shapes (see Figure 13.5 and Figure 11.21). However, at Alkali Ridge, above-ground living rooms are remarkably standardized and outnumber pit structures by about nine to one. Thus, overall, the community is architecturally quite homogeneous. Pit structures on Blue Mesa exhibit a variety of plan shapes, but overall they are not as varied as those in Ridges Basin, particularly in terms of pit structure size and in the types of internal features present in pit structures. Moreover, the Blue Mesa sample is much smaller than the Ridges Basin sample and may not be representative of the entire community. Surface structures are also not as varied on Blue Mesa as they were in the Ridges Basin community. Surface structures on Blue Mesa are consistently small, square, adobe rooms that compose small, one-room-deep room blocks (again,

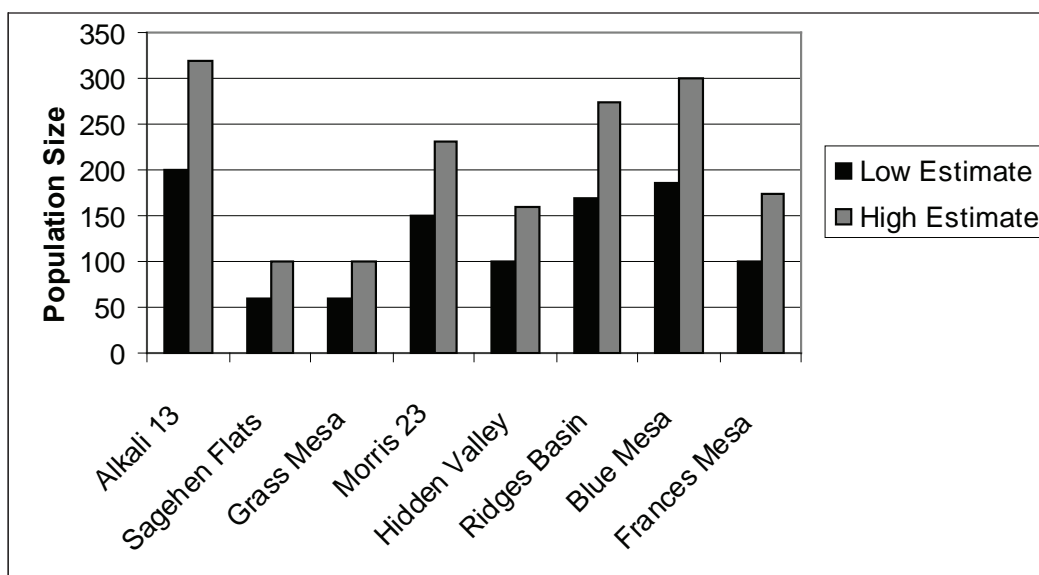
<sup>1</sup> The populations presented in this graph are based on pit structures. This is probably appropriate for all communities except Alkali 13, which is the only village in this group that is not a pit house village. The majority of its population most likely was housed in room blocks. If surface room blocks are used to calculate population density at Alkali 13 then the measure would be off the chart. However, even using pit structures as a proxy for population, this site contains the largest population of any of the identified communities.

based on a very small sample). In addition to surface rooms like these, the Ridges Basin community contained a tower structure, pit rooms, and a pole-and-brush-roofed circular structure delineated with upright slabs.

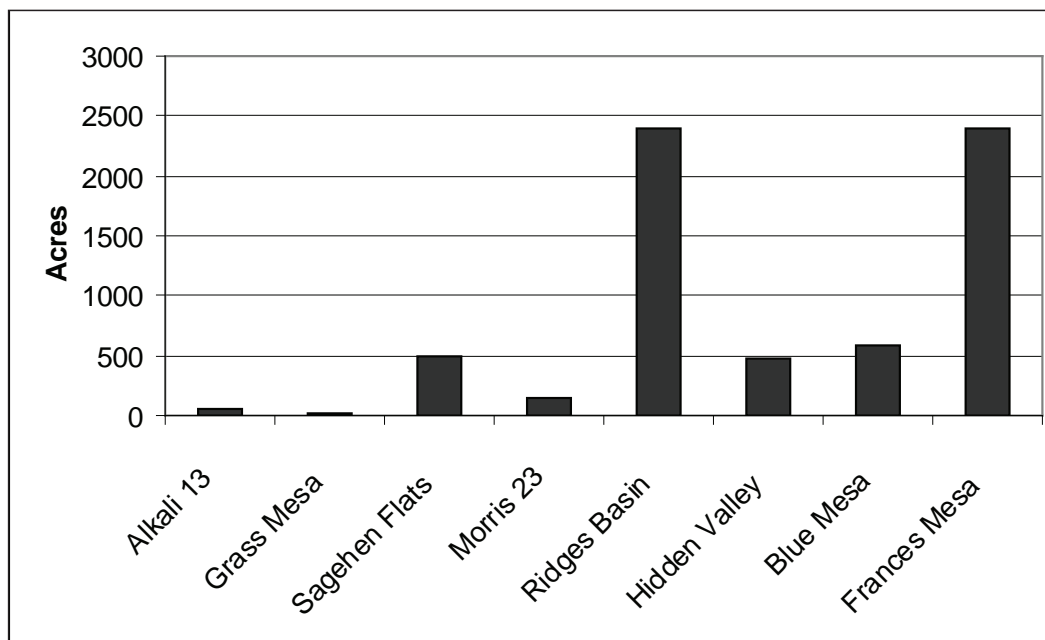
Some, but not all, of the heterogeneity of architectural form in the Ridges Basin community may be due to its position close to the boundary between the Rosa and Piedra areas. Architectural forms—both surface

rooms and pit structures—at other communities in the sample, such as Sagehen Flats and Frances Mesa, are all relatively consistent within each community and conform to the basic trends described for sites in the Bluff, Piedra, and Rosa areas.

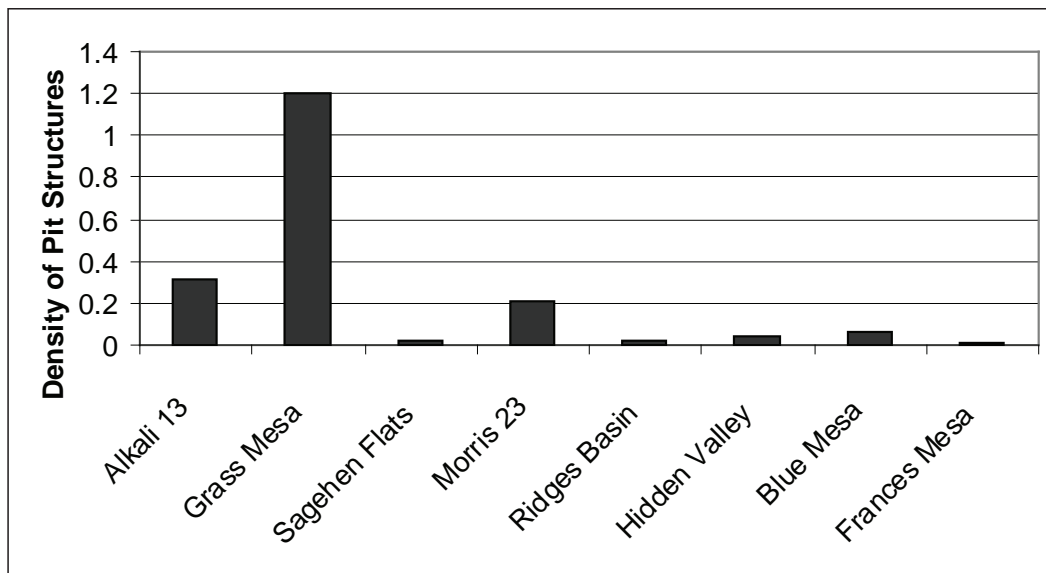
The following is a more detailed comparison of particular traits among the Ridges Basin community and other early Pueblo I communities in the northern Southwest.



**Figure 13.13.** High and low momentary population estimates for early Pueblo I communities, A.D. 700–825.



**Figure 13.14.** Approximate acreage for early Pueblo I communities, from west to east.



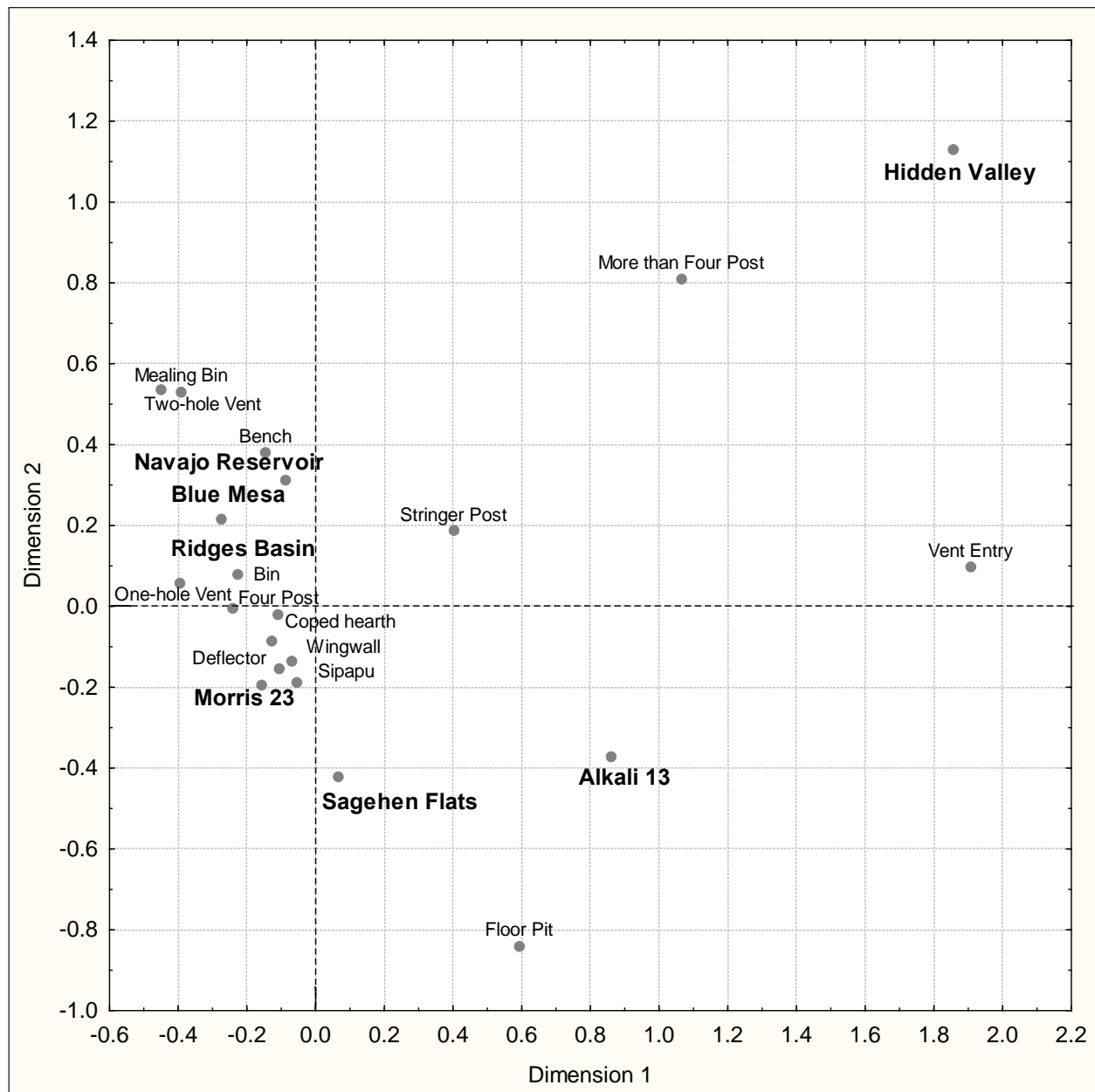
**Figure 13.15.** Number of contemporary pit structures per acre for early Pueblo I communities, from west to east.

## Pit Structures

While it may be difficult to generalize about such a diverse assemblage of pit structures as was documented in the Ridges Basin community, it is possible to describe the frequency of certain architectural traits and how those frequencies compare to other early Pueblo I communities. Pit structure traits from seven communities—Alkali Ridge Site 13, Sagehen Flats, Morris 23, Ridges Basin, Hidden Valley, Blue Mesa, and Navajo Reservoir (see Figure 13.2)—were used in this comparative analysis. The presence or absence of each of the following traits was recorded from each fully excavated and documented early Pueblo I pit structure in each of the communities: bench, four main support posts, more than four main support posts, stringer or leaner posts, one-hole ventilator, two-hole ventilator, ventilator entryway (linking the main structure to an antechamber), wing wall, deflector, sipapu, coped hearth, bin, storage or floor pit, and mealing bin (see Chapter 10, *The House and Household*). Figure 13.16 displays the first two dimensions of this analysis (see Chapter 10 for a brief explanation of correspondence analysis) and shows several interesting trends. The first is the close association of Ridges Basin, Blue

Mesa, and Navajo Reservoir. These communities are all positive along Dimension 2 and negative along Dimension 1 and appear to be clustering based on the high relative frequency of benches, mealing bins, and two-hole ventilators. (Mealing bins are actually rare in the total assemblage [ $n = 3$ ], so their association may be spurious.) One-hole ventilators are also associated with this cluster but are more strongly associated with (closer to) Ridges Basin. Navajo Reservoir and Blue Mesa are most strongly associated with two-hole ventilators. Second, the distribution of communities on the plot generally parallels their geographic locations. Communities that are east of the La Plata River—Ridges Basin, Blue Mesa, and Navajo Reservoir—cluster together; Morris 23 is in the middle; and Sagehen Flats and Alkali Ridge Site 13 cluster in the lower right quadrant (Figure 13.16). This suggests a geographic gradient to trait frequencies. The exception is the Hidden Valley community, which is an outlier due to its high frequency of ventilator entryways and roof support systems with more than four posts. Hidden Valley sites also lack coped hearths, wing walls, deflectors, sipapus, and floor pits, which are common in many of the other locales. Much of the patterning seen in Figure 13.16 is caused by this outlier.



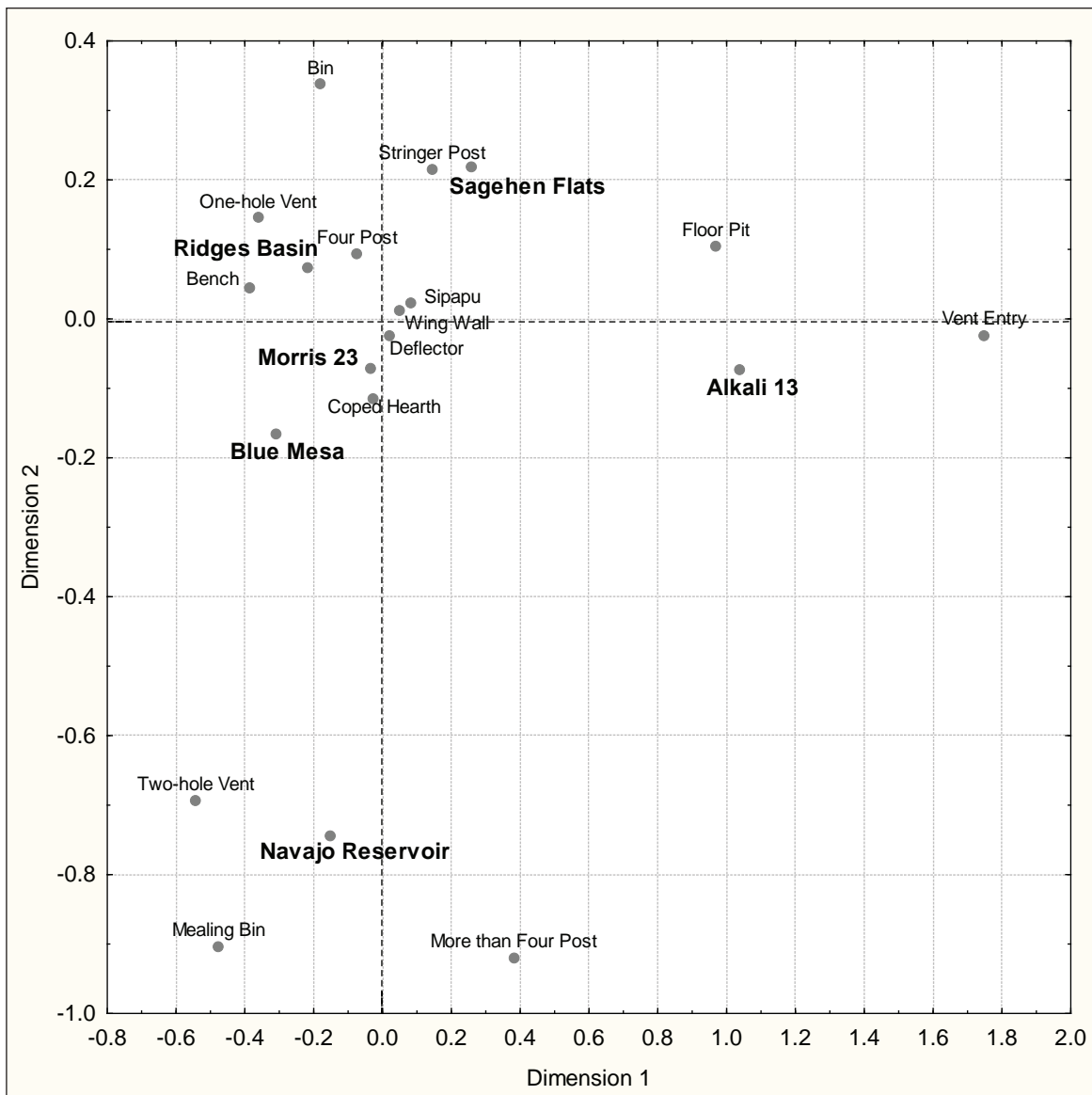


**Figure 13.16.** Plot of first two dimensions of a correspondence analysis performed on architectural trait data from early Pueblo I pit structures. Blue Mesa and Ridges Basin data from SWCA's excavations only. Navajo Reservoir data from LA3427, LA3434, and LA4086 (Eddy 1966). Hidden Valley data from Ign. 7:23, 7:30, 7:31, and 7:36 (Carlson 1963). Sagehen Flats data from 5MT2858, 5MT2854, 5MT2194, 5MT2193, and 5MT4644 (Kane and Gross 1986). Alkali Ridge Site 13 data from Pit Houses A–L (Brew 1946). Morris 23 data from Protokivas 4–7 (Morris 1939).

Figure 13.17 presents the same analysis as that shown in Figure 13.16 but excludes the Hidden Valley community because it is such an extreme outlier. Note again the general east–west trend in the distribution of the communities on the plot, starting in the lower left quadrant with Navajo Reservoir and ending in

the lower right with Alkali Ridge Site 13<sup>2</sup>. Ridges Basin appears in the middle of the distribution, again associated strongly with one-hole ventilators, benches, and a four-post roof support system. Ridges Basin

<sup>2</sup> Distributions produced by correspondence analyses often form a U shape, especially seriations based on trait frequencies, which is essentially what this analysis is.



**Figure 13.17.** Plot of first two dimensions of a correspondence analysis performed on architectural trait data from early Pueblo I pit structures. Data used are the same as in Figure 13.16 but exclude the Hidden Valley community.

also has a high frequency of sipapus, wing walls, and deflectors, but other communities did also and these attributes are therefore neutral variables (i.e., they plot very close to the zero-zero point).

In both analyses, pit structure architectural-trait frequencies in Ridges Basin plot relatively close to those of Blue Mesa and Morris 23, and between those of Navajo Reservoir on the one hand and Sagehen Flats and Alkali Ridge Site 13 on the other. This suggests that, overall,

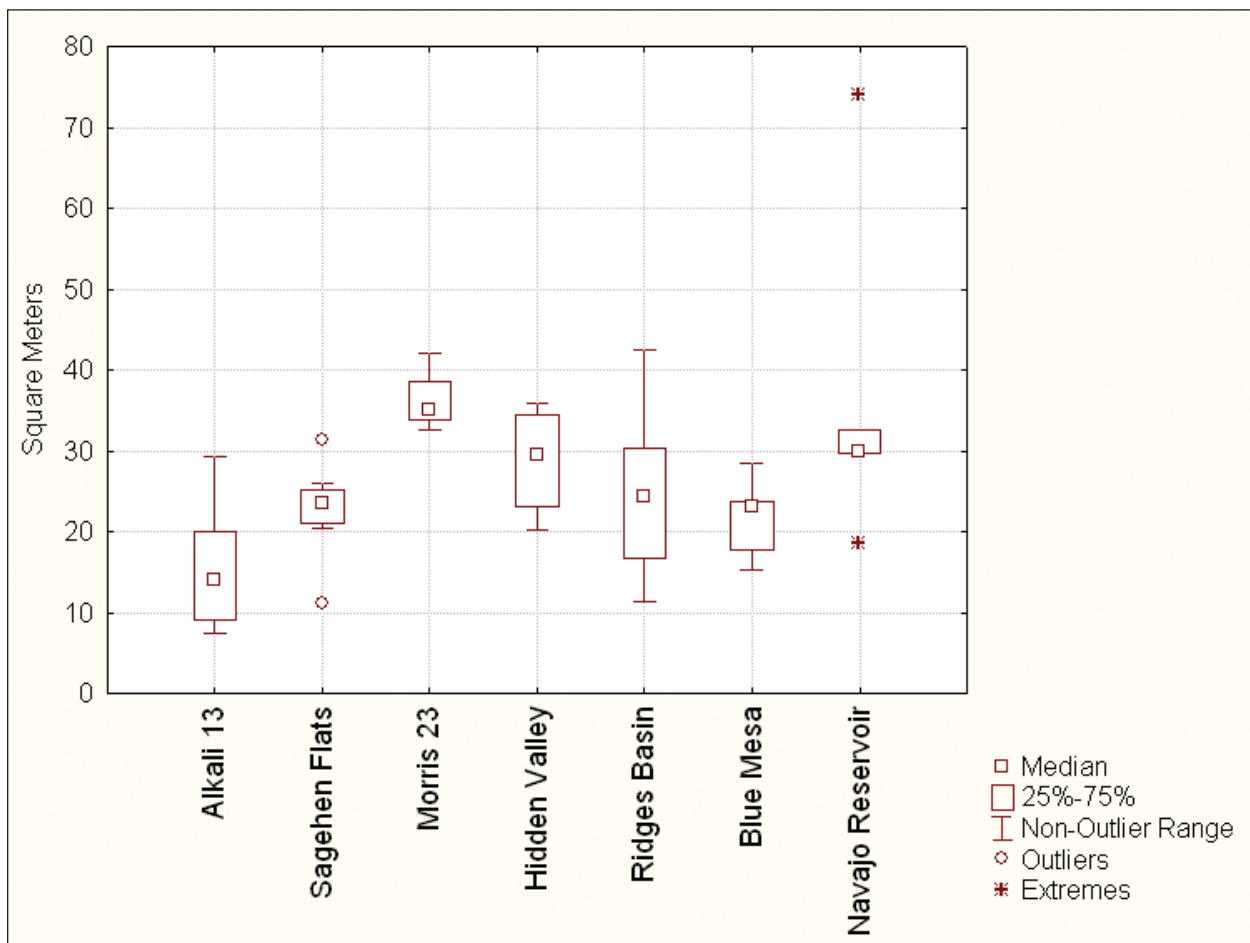
Ridges Basin plots as expected given its geographic position. It also suggests that those few Ridges Basin structures exhibiting attributes strongly associated with distant communities—such as ventilator entryways, two-hole ventilators, floor storage pits, and more than four main roof support posts—and the distributions of these attributes within the community should be examined and considered thoroughly. Chapter 14, *The Economy*, addresses these features and their meaning in greater detail.

The average floor area of Ridges Basin pit structures is 25 m<sup>2</sup>, which is in the middle of the overall distribution for early Pueblo I pit structure sizes; the variance of the Ridges Basin pit structure floor areas, however, is comparatively large (Figure 13.18).

The Morris 23 and Navajo Reservoir communities exhibited the largest structures on average although the sample size for each of these communities was small (four structures each). Alkali Ridge Site 13 had, on average, the smallest structures.

## Communal Ritual Architecture

Communal ritual architecture is defined as architecturally defined space in which many people (more than one household) gathered for the purposes of conducting rituals. In the Pueblo I period, communal ritual architecture comprised oversized pit structures, great kivas, and possibly plazas. Plazas are present in the west and are most well defined at Alkali Ridge Site 13, which has at least three that are each bounded on three sides by surface room blocks (see Figure 13.4). There are also



**Figure 13.18.** Floor areas for pit structures in early Pueblo I communities. Blue Mesa and Ridges Basin data from SWCA's excavations only. Navajo Reservoir data from LA3427, LA3434, and LA4086 (Eddy 1966). Hidden Valley data from Ign. 7:23, 7:30, 7:31, and 7:36 (Carlson 1963). Sagehen Flats data from 5MT2858, 5MT2854, 5MT2194, 5MT2193, and 5MT4644 (Kane and Gross 1986). Alkali Ridge Site 13 data from Pit Houses A–L (Brew 1946). Morris 23 data from Protokivas 4–7 (Morris 1939).

U-shaped room blocks at Martin's Site 2 and, slightly later (in the later ninth century), at McPhee Village, which may have enclosed small plaza areas where communal rituals occurred. Some U-shaped pueblos, such as McPhee Pueblo, had multicourse walls that connected the two ends of the U. These enclosed spaces are rare but present in the Pueblo I period. But very large, formal plazas enclosed on four sides in which communal ritual unambiguously occurred, as is evident in later pueblos, are not evident in the Pueblo I period. Therefore, it is not known whether communal rituals were held in the outdoor spaces at Alkali Ridge Site 13 and Martin's Site 2.

Within these open spaces, however, there is often an oversized pit structure. At Alkali Ridge Site 13, Brew's Pit Houses B, E, and M are "Type III" structures (Brew 1946:157): circular structures with six main support posts and a multitude of secondary support posts and larger-than-average floor areas (Figure 13.5 shows Pit Structure E). One of these structures is present in each plaza along with several smaller structures. As noted above, Brew interpreted these structures as ritual structures analogous to great kivas, but Chuipka (2008b:131) suggests that they are better classified as oversized pit structures due their relatively small size compared to other great kivas. A similar pattern was evident at McPhee Village, and researchers have noted the association at this late Pueblo I community among U-shaped room blocks, oversized pit structures, complex ritual floor features in these structures (Wilshusen 1989), the remains of communal feasting events (Blinman 1989), and ritual paraphernalia (Potter 1997a; Wilshusen 1989).

Two of the early Pueblo I communities included in this study—Grass Mesa Village and Morris 23—were associated with great kivas. (A great kiva is also present at Badger House on Mesa Verde, and even though the structure lacked tree ring dates, its stratigraphic relationship to dated structures suggests a date in the early A.D. 800s [Hayes and Lancaster 1975:60–63].) The great kiva at Grass Mesa (PS 7 in Figure 13.7)

measured 22.6 m in diameter and had a floor area of approximately 400 m<sup>2</sup>. It was constructed sometime between A.D. 760 and 810, and was discontinued from use by A.D. 850 (Lipe et al. 1988:617). Chuipka (2008b:146) notes that this structure is 16 times the size of the contemporaneous structures that surrounded it. The great kiva at Morris 23 has only been surface recorded and is represented by a 22-m-wide depression at the southern end of the community (Chuiipka 2008b:114–115).

East of the La Plata River, communal ritual structures are rare and are not evident in most early Pueblo I communities, including in the communities of Hidden Valley, Blue Mesa, and Frances Mesa. The Sanchez Site in the Navajo Reservoir District (LA 4086) may be an exception. Pit House 1 at the Sanchez Site has a floor area of 74 m<sup>2</sup> and has a large bench, a sipapu, and subfloor pits (Eddy 1966:164–166). Eddy interprets this structure as a domicile for a large family, but, given its inordinate size compared to other pit structures on the site with average floor areas less than half that size, it could also have been a communal ritual structure.

Schachner (2001) argues that there was an important distinction between ritual associated with great kivas and ritual associated with oversized pit structures in the Pueblo I period. Great kiva ritual, he suggests, was not directly associated with particular social segments of a community, whereas communal ritual conducted in oversized pit structures was restricted to segments of the village or community. In other words, oversized pit structures were overtly controlled ritual spaces. He notes that oversized pit structures were two to five times the size of the smaller, household-level pit structures, and were therefore likely the loci of communal events. But, though oversized, they were considerably smaller than great kivas, physically limiting the number of participants in any ritual performance. Schachner (2001:180) also notes the clear association of oversized pit structures with U-shaped room blocks and suggests that access to these structures could have been easily controlled:

The construction of U-shaped roomblocks created small, semienclosed courtyards that enveloped the oversized pit structures. In at least one case, McPhee Pueblo, a wall closed off the open end of the surrounding U-shaped roomblock, restricting access to the oversized pit structure to an even greater degree (Brisbin et al. 1988:234–235). This situation is quite different from that of great kivas, which although perhaps controlled by ritual sanction, were not physically restricted from community access.

In addition, Schachner (2001:181) observes that oversized pit structures are more formally laid out than great kivas and exhibit very little attribute variation, including size, shape, and internal layout:

In some sense, oversized pit structures are regular domestic pit structures writ large, having the same shape and structural layout (posts, wingwalls, etc.) as smaller pit structures, but including very formalized features (foot drums, floor grooves, and perimeter benches) rarely found in other types of pit structures. Pueblo I great kivas, on the other hand, are often largely devoid of internal features.

By these standards, Ridges Basin contains no structures that would be considered great kivas. Five structures, however, may be considered oversized pit structures and may have been the loci of communal ritual. All of these structures were on the Sacred Ridge site. Their floor areas were all greater than 29.5 m<sup>2</sup>, placing them in the category of large pit structure (see Chapter 10) (Table 13.1). In addition to being large, each had a bench, a conical pit offset from the hearth, and a sipapu directly behind the hearth—yet very few additional floor features—as well as a very standardized shape and layout (Figures 13.19–13.21; Table 13.1). Four of the five conical pits were offset to the left of the hearth (assuming one is facing the ventilator); the conical pit associated with Feature 41 was right of the hearth (Figures 13.19

and 13.21). All five structures had four main roof support posts set in the floor. And with the exception of Feature 49, they all had single-hole ventilators. Feature 49 had a large ventilator entryway (see foreground of Figure 13.21).

The best documented Pueblo I oversized pit structures are those at McPhee Village near Dolores (Kane and Robinson 1988; Wilshusen 1988b, 1989). Three structures associated with three different room blocks (5MT4475, 5MT4477, and 5MT5107) had roofed areas greater than 30 m<sup>2</sup> (67 m<sup>2</sup>, 64 m<sup>2</sup>, and 37 m<sup>2</sup>, respectively) and contained a complex array of ritual floor features (Wilshusen 1989). Though the two largest of these structures were slightly larger than the largest structure documented at Sacred Ridge (Feature 49, which had a roofed area of approximately 59 m<sup>2</sup>), the size range was quite comparable (see Table 13.1). The greatest difference between oversized structures at McPhee Village and Sacred Ridge was the tremendous number and complexity of ritual floor features in the McPhee Village structures (Figure 13.22)<sup>3</sup>. By contrast, the oversized structures at Sacred Ridge had few floor features, maximizing the usable floor space in each (see Figure 13.21).

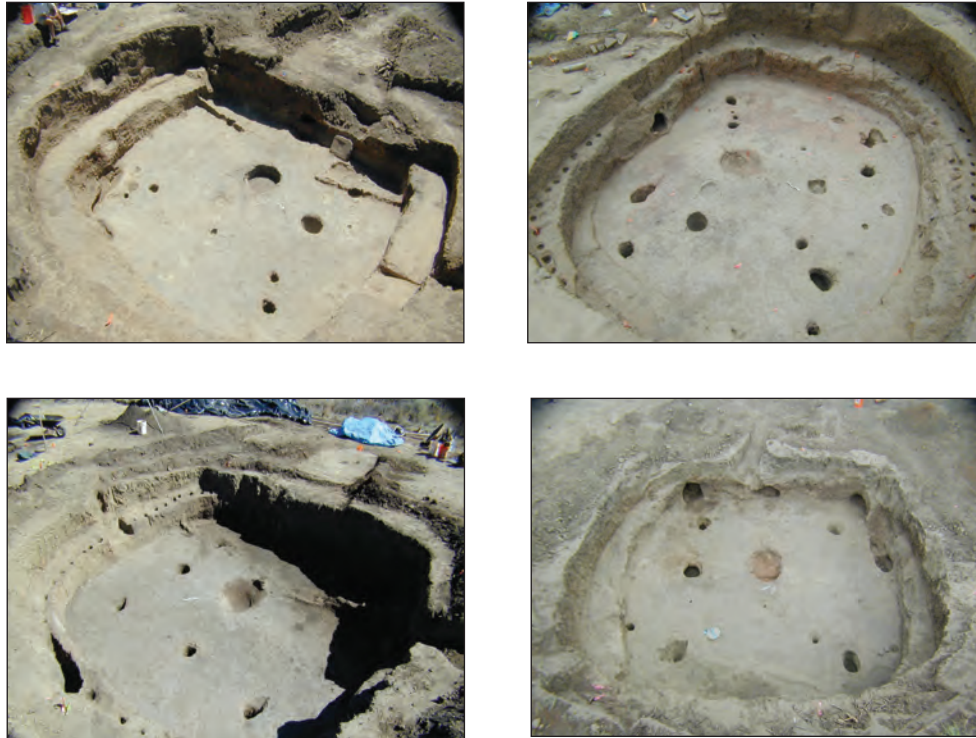
In addition, unlike oversized pit structures in the west (e.g., at McPhee Village and Alkali Ridge Site 13), oversized pit structures in Ridges Basin were not enclosed by surface room blocks. They were, however, associated with specific households and, within Ridges Basin, were found only on Sacred Ridge. Thus, access to them may have been fairly controlled and restricted to segments of the village or community, as Schachner (2001) notes for oversized pit structures in the west. The role served by these structures in the community and the activities associated with them as evidenced by artifact assemblages is further discussed in Chapter 15, Ritual, Social Power, and Identity.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the Figure 13.22 photograph is of the basal floor of the structure and has features from both the upper and lower surfaces. A number of the features were filled in and capped.



**Table 13.1.** Oversized Pit Structures at the Sacred Ridge Site

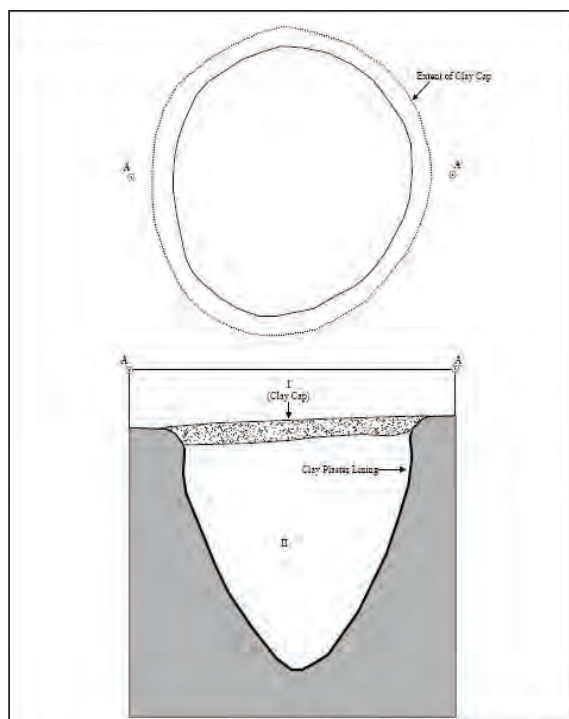
Locus	Feature Number	Dimensions (m)	Roofed Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Floor Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Bench	Conical Pit	Sipapu	Shape
3	41	8.5 x 7.0	52	35	Present	Present	Present	D-shaped
5	117	8.8 x 7.6	57	40	Present	Present	Present	Sub-square
6	49	8.3 x 8.2	59	43	Present	Present	Present	Sub-square
7	83	7.0 x 6.3	38	30	Present	Present	Present	Sub-square
9	58	7.9 x 6.8	46	39	Present	Present	Present	Sub-square

**Figure 13.19.** Photographs of Feature 41 (upper left), Feature 117 (upper right), Feature 83 (lower left), and Feature 58 (lower right).

## Surface Rooms

Early Pueblo I communities west of the La Plata River generally had double-row room blocks; the front rooms were generally living rooms and the back rooms storage rooms. Alkali Ridge Site 13, Sagehen Flats, and Morris 23 are examples of this type of arrangement (Brew 1946; Kane and Gross 1986; Morris 1939). Pit structures also shared room blocks; that is, room blocks were shared by more than one household. This is a pattern that persists into the late Pueblo I period (A.D. 850–900) in the west at sites such as Duckfoot (Lightfoot 1994) and McPhee Pueblo (Kane and Robinson 1988). Grass

Mesa Village is the exception to this rule. In both the pre-A.D. 850 and the late Pueblo I incarnation of this settlement, room blocks were one-row deep and it is unknown whether multiple households shared room blocks (Lipe et al. 1988; Wilshusen and Ortman 1999). “Upright sandstone slabs, vertically coursed masonry, wattle and daub, and jacal construction styles are all found in Pueblo I rooms, sometimes with several styles evident in the same room” (Wilshusen 1988b:610). Often surface rooms combined lower masonry wall construction with an upper wall construction of mud and vegetal materials.



**Figure 13.20.** Plan and profile of Subfeature 41.03, a conical pit feature associated with Feature 41.



**Figure 13.21.** Photograph of Feature 49 at Locus 6 of the Sacred Ridge site, the largest structure in the project area.





**Figure 13.22.** Photograph of an oversized pit structure at McPhee Village showing complex ritual floor features (courtesy Richard Wilshusen).

Room blocks on Blue Mesa and in Ridges Basin, by contrast, were one-room deep and were not shared by more than one household. These rooms were most often storage rooms, but habitation activities are evident in some (see Chapter 10). They are also much more ephemeral in their construction and were mostly of wood and adobe construction, particularly in Ridges Basin. By contrast, upright slab construction was evident on Blue Mesa at 5LP2026 (Figure 13.23).

Surface rooms in Ridges Basin most often were made of jacal walls and a vegetal and adobe roof. Surface rooms were defined by the presence of post holes, rock alignments, and burned adobe wall fall and roof fall. Surface rooms at 5LP177 in the Eastern Cluster were some of the most substantial uncovered in Ridges Basin (Figure 13.24). The room block at 5LP177 consisted of two large rooms and two smaller rooms. All of the

structures were approximately 2.7 m wide, with the two larger rooms being about 6.0 m long and the two smaller rooms being about 2.0 m long. Although much of the burned adobe and wood architectural debris of these rooms was jumbled, *in situ* sections were observed where timbers had collapsed inside the rooms. These sections revealed the impressions of parallel beams or posts embedded into a thick layer of smoothed adobe. These segments most likely represented portions of fallen walls constructed from series of wooden posts and smoothed adobe.

Some sites in Ridges Basin contained non-contiguous pit rooms rather than contiguous surface rooms. Pit rooms are not evident on Blue Mesa, but surface rooms in the Rosa area, including Navajo Reservoir and Frances Mesa, comprised non-contiguous pit rooms exclusively (see Figure 13.8).



**Figure 13.23.** Surface room block at 5LP2026 on Blue Mesa. Average room size is 4 m<sup>2</sup>. Note the lack of floor features.



**Figure 13.24.** Surface room block at 5LP177 in Ridges Basin. Note the burned adobe evident on the floor and the lack of floor features.



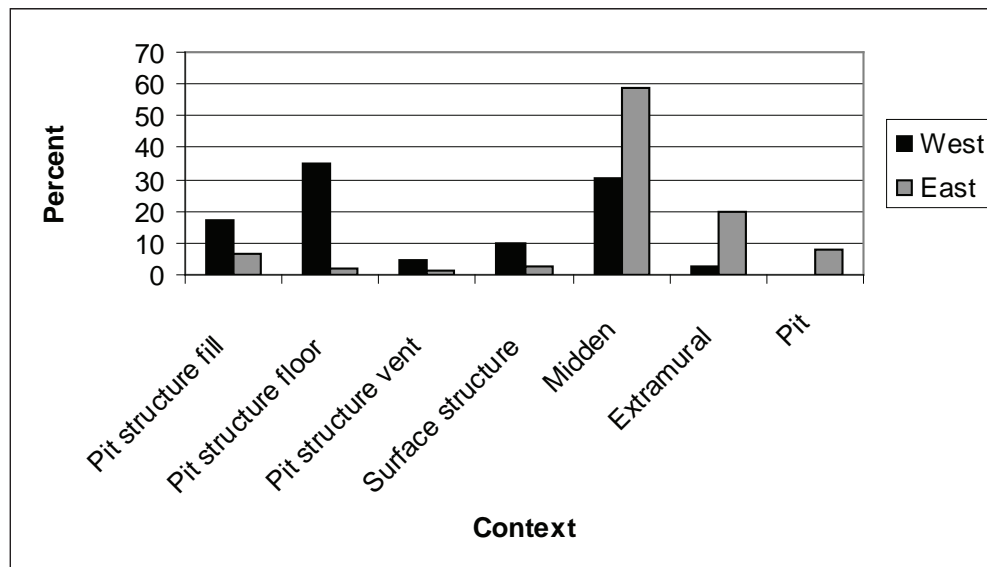
## Mortuary Features

Prior to the ALP project, 10 projects in the northern Southwest had recorded data on the context of mortuary features dating to the Pueblo I period (A.D. 750–900). Four of these projects were conducted west of the La Plata River drainage, and six were conducted within or east of the La Plata River drainage (Table 13.2). The data suggest that west of the La Plata, interment occurred more frequently in association with architecture. A full two-thirds (66.5%) of interments west of the La Plata River were found in intramural contexts, either in association with a pit structure (on the floor, in post-occupational fill, or in ventilator shaft fill) or in fill or floor contexts in surface structures. In contrast, east of the La Plata River, including in Ridges Basin, 88 percent of interments occurred in extramural nonarchitectural contexts such as middens, extramural non-midden areas, and extramural pits (Figure 13.25; Table 13.2).

These larger spatial patterns hold true even though several mortuary contexts pose interpretive challenges. Individuals found on the occupational surfaces of pit structures have been interpreted in a number of ways in the western subregion, for example. Several of the

individuals found on the floors of McPhee Village pit structures are interpreted as having been intentionally killed (Wilshusen 1986), whereas individuals in association with pit structure floors at Duckfoot seem to have been entombed in the house (perhaps the house they had lived in) as part of a normal (nonviolent) mortuary sequence (Hoffman 1993:265–268; Lightfoot 1994:46–48). Regardless, even without these floor-contact interments, the high incidence in the western subregion of interments in association with surface structures and pit structure fill and ventilators indicates a strong association of formal interments with architectural contexts.

The few instances in the eastern subregion of bodies associated with the floor of a pit structure may not relate to standard mortuary practice. Two individuals found on a pit structure floor at 5LP481 in Bodo Canyon appear to represent individuals who were trapped in the structure when it burned (Fuller 1988a:138). To Fritz and Honeycutt (2003), the position of an adult woman on the floor of a pit structure at 5LP379 on Blue Mesa suggests that this was not a formal burial. The individual was lying supine with arms bent and the hands adjacent to the head. The legs were splayed apart with the knees slightly bent and pointing outward.



**Figure 13.25.** Relative frequencies of mortuary feature contexts in the western subregion and eastern subregion of the Northern San Juan region.



Table 13.2. Pueblo I Mortuary Feature Contexts in the Northern San Juan Region

Project or Area  (sites containing Pueblo I mortuary features)	Number of Mortuary Features	Number of Individuals	Context of Interment					Intramural			Reference
			Extramural		Extramural Pit	Pit Structure Fill/ Bench	Pit Structure Floor	Pit Structure Ventilator	Surface Structure Fill/ Floor/Subfloor		
			Midden/ Refuse Mound	Extramural Area (non-midden)							
Western Subregion											
Alkali Ridge (Site 13)	1	1		1 (100.0)							Brew 1946
Badger House (MV1676)	7	9	2 (22.2)		4 (44.4)				3 (33.3)		Hayes and Lancaster 1975
Dolores Archaeological Program (Grass Mesa, McPhee Village, Periman Hamlet)	37	45	12 (26.6)	1 (2.2)		12 (26.6)	13 (28.9)	3 (6.7)	4 (8.9)		Stodder 1987
Duckfoot (Duckfoot Site, 5MT3868)	11	14	7 (50.0)				7 (50.0)				Lightfoot and Etzkorn 1993
Totals for Western Subregion	56	69	21 (30.4)	2 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	12 (17.3)	24 (34.8)	3 (4.3)	7 (10.1)		
Eastern Subregion											
La Plata District (Morris 33)	8	8		8 (100.0)							Morris 1939
ALP Project (various)	125	142	79 (55.6)	33 (23.2)	8 (5.6)	14 (9.9)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.4)	5 (3.5)		
UMTRA-Bodo Canyon (5LP481, 5LP483)	12	12	9 (75.0)			1 (6.7)	2 (16.7)				Fuller 1988
MAPL (5LP379)	1	1					1 (100.0)				Fritz and Honeycutt 2003
Hidden Valley (Ign. 7:23)	17	17	17 (100.0)								Carlson 1963
Navajo Reservoir (Sambrito Village, LA 4195)	3	9			9 (100.0)						Eddy 1966
Piedra District (“A” Village)	16	16	16 (100.0)								Roberts 1930
Totals for Eastern Subregion	182	205	121 (59.0)	41 (20.0)	17 (8.3)	15 (7.3)	4 (2.0)	2 (1.0)	5 (2.4)		

The body position implies that the individual died where she fell (Fritz and Honeycutt 2003:3-20). Two projectile points found in association with this individual led the authors to conclude that “the woman was killed in an act of violence and the pit house was then pulled down and burned over her body” (Fritz and Honeycutt 2003:3-21).

The single individual found on a pit structure floor in Ridges Basin as part of the ALP project also may have been killed. At 5LP237 the skeletal remains of a young adult male (Burial 137) were discovered on the floor of a burned pit structure. The pattern of burning on the remains suggests that the individual was lying on his left side when the burned roof collapsed. Two projectile points and remnants of a feather and yucca blanket were found in association with this individual (Eisenhauer et al. 2008e:244). As with the Blue Mesa example, one interpretation is that this did not represent a formal burial but rather an incidence of violence. It is possible the victim was killed with arrows while sleeping on the blanket and the house was then burned down over him. The rarity of this type of mortuary feature in the eastern subregion and its similarity to other nearby human remains that have been interpreted as acts of violence rather than formal burials makes this a likely explanation.

It is also possible, however, that these individuals died elsewhere and were then placed on the floors of the pit structures, which were then burned down around them as part of a formal mortuary ritual. It is not known whether this has positive or negative connotations about the individual or the manner of death, but it might have been a rather expensive ritual if it required roof beams and an otherwise useable structure to be destroyed. As Wilshusen (1986:254) notes about floor-associated interments at McPhee Pueblo, “the fact that burials appear to have been deposited in ritual structures of secondary importance suggests that the individuals lacked social status at their death and yet that their

demise had sufficient ritual importance to provoke the community into destroying a ritual structure in order to bury them (e.g., they were ‘witches’).”

Another Pueblo I context of interment with multiple possible interpretations is the exterior pit. These features were common at Sambrito Village in the Navajo Reservoir area (see Table 13.2) and consisted of burials “found almost entirely in pits which were originally dug for other purposes” (Eddy 1966:243). Often multiple individuals were placed in the pits.

Most bodies were grouped in sets of from two to four.... Some of these group interments may have resulted from reuse of a pit, but lack of evidence of later disturbance indicates planned multiple burials in most cases. Since the combined burials were made in pits of undercut style, it was necessary either to place the bodies in layers or side by side near the outflaring base of the pit chamber. Sometimes combinations of these arrangements were made with two skeletons side by side near the bottom, both being overlain by a third near the top of the pit. (Eddy 1966:243)

Since most of these mortuary features contained graves goods—primarily ceramic pots—they were considered formal burials and not the haphazard burial of victims of violence. A similar feature in Ridges Basin, however, is not so clearly interpreted. A former roasting pit at 5LP237 contained four adults and one child. The individuals appeared to have been deposited in the pit haphazardly, with no accompanying goods (Eisenhauer et al. 2008e:245). The uniqueness of this mortuary feature compared to others in Ridges Basin suggests that it does not represent usual mortuary treatment, which may either indicate uniquely strong ties of a single household with Sambrito Village or a single instance of the quick and informal disposal of victims of violence or disease.

Ridges Basin excavations for the ALP project more than doubled the number of Pueblo I mortuary features for which the context of interment has been described. Contextual data from Ridges Basin indicate a strong association with the eastern subregion—with most interments associated with extramural areas—rather than with the western subregion, in which architectural interments predominate. Moreover, the few individuals in and around Ridges Basin that were found associated with architectural features were either victims of violence or an accidental house fire rather than recipients of formal mortuary treatment.

### Ceramic Design

Glaze-painted black-on-white bowls from the Rosa area, including Ridges Basin, have distinctive layouts that almost always include a small circle in the bottom of the bowl and that make extensive use of concentric circles, including “walking circles” (Allison 2010) (Figure 13.26, lower right). These characteristics are less common on black-on-white mineral-painted bowls from the west of the La Plata river (the Piedra area [see

Figure 13.3]), which more often incorporate rectilinear elements. “At least two local whiteware technological and stylistic traditions thus occurred in the region, with the division somewhere near the La Plata River” (Allison 2008:53). San Juan Red Ware, including both Abajo Red-on-orange and Bluff Black-on-red varieties, is another decorated vessel type found in Ridges Basin. These vessels were imported into Ridges Basin, however, and therefore do not represent a local design style. Redware exchange is discussed in more detail in Chapter 14.

### Environment

Chapter 9, *The Natural Environment*, describes the local environment of Ridges Basin, using archaeological, geomorphic, paleoclimatic, and modern environmental data. Interestingly, when comparing the local natural environments of other early Pueblo I communities in the northern Southwest, the similarities are striking. Alkali Ridge Site 13, Sagehen Flats, Grass Mesa, Morris 23, Ridges Basin, and Blue Mesa are all situated at elevations between 6,250 and 6,850 feet above mean



**Figure 13.26.** Rosa Black-on-white bowls from Ridges Basin.

sea level (Chuiпка 2008b:48–50). Furthermore, Chuiпка (2008b:48) notes that

directly related to the occupation of this elevation range, each site occupies an ecologically diverse location where a variety of biotic communities interface. All of the sites in the study sample are located within 5 km (3.0 miles) of no fewer than five different biotic communities. Each of these biotic communities hosts a variety of economically useful wild plant and animal species that would have been important as both food and raw material resources.

A third similarity noted by Chuiпка is that each of these communities, including Ridges Basin, is located on or immediately adjacent to deep soils suitable for dryland farming.

These soils are characterized as well-drained, fine to very fine sandy loam and clay loam (Honeycutt 1985:17–20; Lipe et al. 1988:11–15). These soils are highly suitable for dry-farm techniques as they absorb high quantities of moisture during melting of winter precipitation and retain that moisture well during the growing season (Fuller 1988a:5). (Chuiпка 2008b:49)

Finally, at least two other Pueblo I communities, besides Ridges Basin, are located near a marsh. Sagehen Flats was an open, flat, bottom-lands area west of the Dolores River. Prior to inundation by McPhee Reservoir, this area contained a substantial wetland known as the Sagehen Flats Marsh (Clay 1985; Petersen 1985) and two Pueblo I communities, the Sagehen Flats community and, later, McPhee Village. It seems possible that some Pueblo I communities were intentionally established in or near marshy environments<sup>4</sup>. Marshes not only collect water but also attract game for hunting, and they produce wetland ruderal foods such as cattail (Wilshusen et al. 1997:675). Moreover, marshes hold a special place in the Pueblo landscape for their religious and spiritual significance (Potter 2009:211).

<sup>4</sup> There was a wetland area just below Morris 23 in the form of an old abandoned bend in the river. But it is not clear whether it would have been there in Pueblo I times.

## SUMMARY

The Ridges Basin community was similar to other Pueblo I communities and yet unique. Its population size, its spatial extensiveness, and the unevenness of the distribution of its population are unprecedented and unmatched in the Northern San Juan region at that time. It is the only known early Pueblo I community to consist of a core village and dispersed settlement clusters. Additionally, the Ridges Basin community is the most architecturally heterogeneous early Pueblo I community in the Northern San Juan. Indeed, one of the most distinctive traits exhibited by the Ridges Basin community is the presence of the oversized pit structures associated with—and only with—the Sacred Ridge site. These structures were not only large; they were extremely consistent in their internal architectural traits. Each contained a conical pit offset from the hearth, a wide bench, few floor features, and four main roof support posts in the floor. Four of the five structures had a single-hole ventilator, while one, the largest, had a ventilator entry. These structures were similar in size to oversized pit structures documented at McPhee Village and Alkali Ridge Site 13, but, unlike those structures, they were not enclosed by surface rooms and did not contain extensive ritual floor features. They may have functioned more as great kivas in that access to them was not blocked by surface rooms or walls, and they appear to have been constructed to accommodate large numbers of people, albeit still just a segment of the total community population.

In other ways, however, Ridges Basin fits the expectations derived from its geographic location. Locally decorated ceramics are consistently Rosa style. Internal pit structure feature traits were more similar to those of nearby communities than to those of distant communities. Surface room construction combined both eastern and western building styles but, being only one-room deep, was most often similar to surface room construction in the Rosa area. And, the context of interment of human remains (extramural rather than intramural) was most similar to the pattern documented in the Rosa area.

Whether these settlements can be considered socially meaningful entities or whether they are simply archaeological constructs may still be an empirical question. Social groups analogous to what anthropologists term *communities* are not necessarily present in every society (Hegmen 2002), and the social construction of a community is a process to be documented rather than assumed (Kintigh 2003; Schachner 2008; Varien and Potter 2008). That said, perhaps Pauketat's description of communities as *hybridities* is a productive way to view these early population centers (Pauketat 2008 citing Alt 2006). Hybridities are the places where "differences engage," and are the spaces for "the creation of new cultural forms" (Alt 2006:291). "When dissimilar agents occupy a common ground, their collective co-engagement has the potential to generate novel outcomes: hybridity" (Pauketat 2008:241). The tremendous variation and fluidity exhibited by Pueblo I communities suggest that this term characterizes these settlements better, perhaps, than does the classic term *community*.





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