



## Petroglyphs and Pictographs

McKee Springs Petroglyphs

For over 9,000 years, many people have called this area home. While some cultural groups left little evidence of their presence, others made marks on the landscape we can still see today. Rock carvings (petroglyphs) and paintings (pictographs) created thousands of years ago offer an intriguing connection to people and cultures of the past.

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## The Fremont Culture

The Native American cultural group often associated with rock art found at Dinosaur National Monument is the Fremont.

Archeologists first studied and named the Fremont culture from sites along the Fremont River in south-central Utah. Their unique cultural traits emerged around the year 450 AD and have been found throughout most of Utah and parts of Colorado, Nevada, and Idaho. The Fremont were contemporaries with better known Ancestral Puebloan cultures found further south in the Four Corners region.

The lifestyle of the Fremont varied, reflecting the diverse environments they inhabited. In general they lived in small groups and did not build large permanent homes. Structures ranged from rock overhangs or shallow caves to pithouse villages in open areas.

The Fremont harvested native plants and hunted wild game. They also cultivated corn, beans, and squash, sometimes using irrigation techniques. Archeological evidence suggests many sites were used seasonally as people moved according to climate and availability of water or food.

## Making Their Mark

While the Fremont lifestyle left a fairly light trace on the landscape, an impressive array of petroglyphs and pictographs have survived for centuries. The style and content of designs vary throughout the region. Human figures typically have trapezoidal bodies, which may or may not include arms, legs, hands and feet. Elaborate decorations suggest headdresses, earrings, necklaces, shields or other objects. Animal figures include bighorn sheep, birds, snakes, and lizards. Abstract or geometric designs are common, including circles, spirals, and various combinations of lines.

We cannot know why Fremont people chose to create these specific designs and figures. We can only speak with today's Native American groups, including the Ute, who claim cultural affiliation with the Fremont, about what this art might mean.

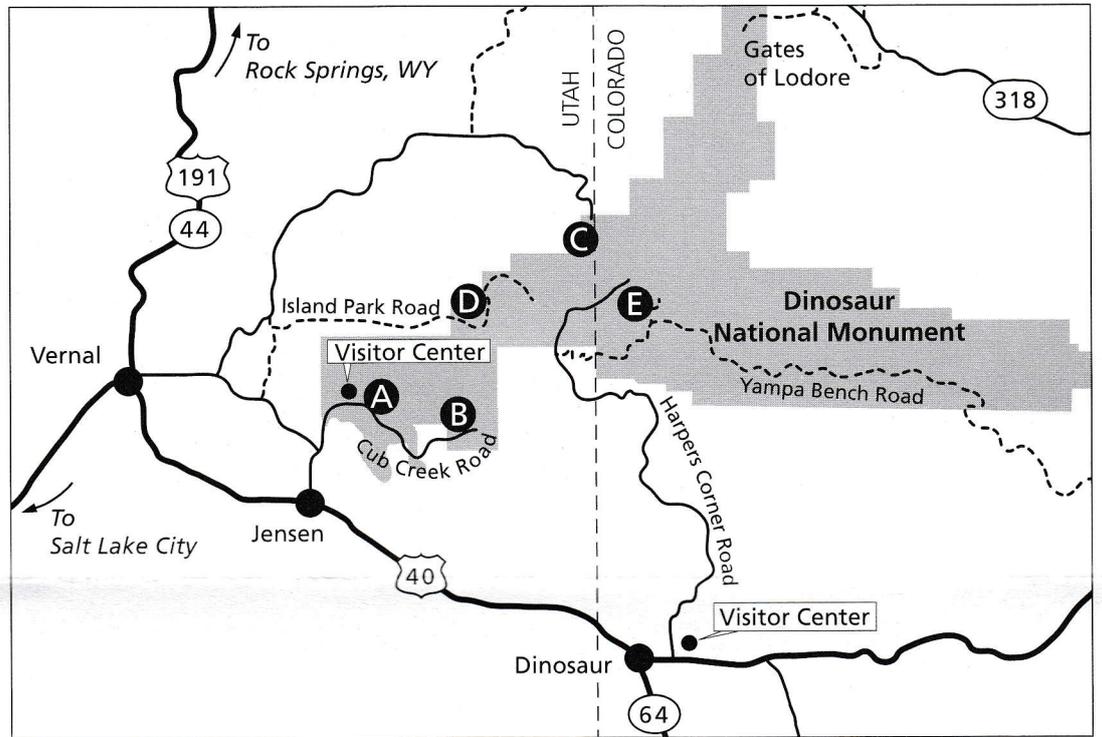
People rarely "disappear." However, changes in trends, technology and environmental factors can affect how we identify a cultural group. By 1400 AD, the Fremont culture appeared to evolve or blend into something new.

## Protecting the Past

Petroglyphs and pictographs are fragile, irreplaceable records of the past. Touching rock art can leave skin oils behind and tracings or rubbings can hasten erosion and ruin the designs. Federal law protects all artifacts, including rock art. Do your part to protect the past, and immediately report any vandalism you find.



**Viewing Rock Art  
throughout Dinosaur**



### A) Swelter Shelter

#### (Cub Creek Road, Sign #1)

Drive one mile east from the Quarry Visitor Center to find both petroglyphs (patterns chipped or carved into the rock) and pictographs (patterns painted on the rock) at Swelter Shelter. A very short and mostly level trail leads to the small alcove where both types of rock art are located. Based on archeological evidence, this shelter was used, but not extensively occupied, by the Fremont people, and may have been reserved for special purposes and activities. Swelter Shelter has been occupied by older cultures dating to as early as 7000 BC. The natural rock alcove faces directly south, catching the sun from the early morning until late afternoon. The sandstone "shelter" traps and reflects heat, producing the sweltering conditions that inspired its name by archeologists in 1965.

### B) Cub Creek

#### (Signs #13 and 14)

Petroglyph panels here feature a variety of typical Fremont designs, but are distinguished by several large lizard figures, not common at other sites. Sandstone cliffs darkened with desert varnish, a naturally formed stain of iron and manganese oxides, provided an ideal canvas for carving petroglyphs. Stop 13 is right along the road, stop 14 requires a short hike up a steep hill. These stops are located on the unpaved section of Cub Creek Road - easily driven by 2-wheel drive vehicles, even when wet.

### C) Deluge Shelter on the Jones Hole Trail

Pictographs and petroglyphs are found in Deluge Shelter, located along the Jones Hole Creek Trail. This site is approximately two miles from the trailhead. Pictographs are produced by painting with mineral paints. Fremont pictographs are usually painted in blue, red, or white pigments. The pictographs in Dinosaur National Monument are painted in red pigments consisting of iron oxide.

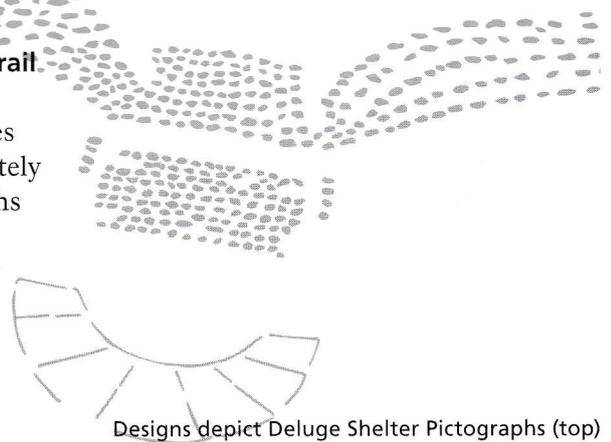
**Note:** The unpaved Island Park and Echo Park roads can become slick, rutted and impassable when wet. All-wheel drive, high clearance vehicles are recommended for the Echo Park Road. Check weather and road conditions before visiting.

### D) McKee Springs on Island Park Road

McKee Springs, near Rainbow Park, displays some of the finest large human-like designs in Dinosaur, and many other figures. Some petroglyphs show traces of pigment, possibly indicating that many designs originally included painted areas. A large human figure holding a shield (pictured on the front of this brochure) displays many diagnostic features of the Classic Vernal Style of Fremont rock art.

### E) Pool Creek on Echo Park Road and Echo Park Campground

Pool Creek (on the unpaved road to Echo Park) includes a panel of unusual dot-pattern designs pecked or drilled high above the creek. Many rock art sites in Dinosaur National Monument may look inaccessible now, but could easily have been reached by climbing to the desired location. In the case of the Pool Creek petroglyphs, geologists found evidence of massive erosion in the canyon, causing the canyon level to drop substantially since the petroglyphs were completed. At the end of the road, near campsite #10, a panel of dark desert varnish contains several figures best seen with binoculars.



Designs depict Deluge Shelter Pictographs (top) and Pool Creek Canyon Petroglyphs