

## A UNIQUE MAP IN STONE

by

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High on a cliff wall overlooking the Fremont River near the town of Fruita within the Capitol Reef National Park is a petroglyph panel that left an important message that up to this time we failed to understand. It is a map in stone covering perhaps forty miles east to west on the Fremont River. It has the "signature" of the Fremont Indians as under the panel, facing us, are two standing Fremont Indians. The one on the left perhaps holds a ceremonial "mace" of a big horned sheep in his left hand while the one standing on the right (facing the panel) is richly ornamented with a necklace, and probably mask. Near these two figures are big horned sheep, perhaps an elk or deer, a single footprint and even a chirping bird.

Our focus will be not on the individual glyphs, but rather on the cut lines flowing across the panel and radiating up and down from the main deep cut line that flows horizontally across the panel and are generally above most of the figures we noted. After a careful study of this panel against maps from the U.S. Geological Service, it is apparent that this represents the Fremont River system as pecked into the rock by a Fremont Indian artist some 800 to 1300 years ago. From our left (west on the map), it represents an area from Torrey where the Sulphur River runs to the north of the Fremont, to Fruita where they join, crossing the Waterpocket Fold, and joined by the Pleasant Creek and later Sandy and Oak Creeks and finally flowing north to around today's town of Hanksville where the Fremont veers sharply north. This covers an area going from west to east of perhaps 40 miles. Here the Fremont is joined by the Muddy Creek and both flow into the Dirty Devil River which flows into the Colorado River. In this remarkable panel detailing a river system, hunting resources and the hunter, and a unique geological fault, the Waterpocket Fold, we are left a graphic message from the past.

But let us see how we arrived at this remarkable conclusion. On Labor Day in 1991 following an annual meeting of the Utah Rock Art Research Association at Green River, Utah, my wife, Edith and I joined a party headed by Jesse Warner, a most dedicated and knowledgeable leader, to see the Fremont petroglyphs at Fruita. We parked at a turnout on route 24 about 9/10th of a mile east of the Capitol Reef National Park center, viewed the Fremont life-sized panels high on the north cliff wall and then walked east along the base of the cliff studying the petroglyphs of Fremont Indians including figures, ornaments and necklaces, and big horned sheep which continue for perhaps 3/10th of a mile east. At this point, Jesse and his group decided to ford the Fremont River to see petroglyphs to the south. He noted to a couple of us that if we went to the end of the orchard and climbed the talus, that there was a Fremont petroglyph panel high on the cliff. (This panel is located about 1.2 miles east of the Capitol Reef National Park Center on route 24, 3/10th of a mile east of the parking area available to view Fremont panels and just east of Kruger's peach and apple orchard.) Two of us decided to climb the rocky talus (My wife Edie remained behind). As we got to the top, we found a large panel facing us and to the left (west) was a circle of large

rocks left by the early Indians. (While some feel that these were used in religious ceremonies, possibly meditation, others think they were "sleeping circles." We just do not know.) Before us was this large Fremont panel earlier described. I took several rolls of film of this remarkable panel including wide angle shots in an attempt to get the entire panel in one picture. We left, winded by the climb.

After returning home to Tucson, I reviewed the slides and wondered whether these intersecting lines might not represent a map. By projecting slides of the panel, I drew the petroglyph panel from these images. Unfortunately, on the far right as the rock curls away from the viewer, my picture did not clearly show the point near present day Hanksville where the Fremont River abruptly veers north. (It was for this reason that I used the more detailed drawing in the Schaafsma text (Schaafsma 1971:47). My wife brought me a copy of the Capitol Reef publication Rock Glow, Sky Shine (Trimble 1979: unpaginated) which has a detailed map of the area in it. To my amazement you could almost set today's map showing the Fremont river and its tributaries over the Fruita panel and find a close match. At this point it was obvious that we needed the answers to a number of key questions. We needed to find out (1) What had been written about this site by earlier archaeologists? (The Fruita petroglyph site refers to a general area that is north of the Fremont River in the Fruita District and runs about 3/10th of a mile east from the parking lot pull-out and includes petroglyphs across the Fremont on the south side of the river as well. (2) Was there any particular significance to the two Fremont Indians on the panel? (If this was a map of the river system could these figures represent the location of villages?) (3) Most disturbing - What was the significance of the two parallel wavy lines that ran vertically down the panel? (Why did the lines for the Fremont River stop just before the first wavy line and continue again just after it?) (4) Were there any written records of other petroglyph maps by the Fremont Indians or any other their Southwest contemporaries? And (5) Did the pattern and organization of the river system on the panel largely match those of current maps of the area?

To better understand this important Fruita Map panel, we needed to see if early research would answer some of the questions we posed. It was Noel Morss whose original work in 1928 had lead to the recognition of the Fremont Indians as a unique culture (Morss 1931 (3) 1-81). It was then a revolutionary concept among archaeologist when he wrote:

The work of July and August, 1928, revealed and unexpected and interesting situation.... we had every reason to believe that any remains found by us would fall readily into the established sequence of southwestern cultures with only minor local variations. Quite to the contrary, the Fremont drainage proved to be the seat of a distinctive culture, to which nearly all of the local remains are to be assigned. (Morss 1931 (3): iii-iv)

Noel Morss called this new culture, the Fremont Indians. This group was differentiated from surrounding cultures in that the Fremont had distinctive pictographs of thin-wasted facing figures adorned with necklace, belt or mask, no kivas, unbaked figurines and a unique style moccasin. The exceptionally large number of Fremont sites in the area are indicated by the following map of the sites in Fremont drainage that follows (Morss 1931 (3): Plate 2). As a

part of the Peabody studies, the Claflin-Emerson Expedition also was initiated in the spring of 1928 but it was not published until 1969 when its results were included in a study written for the Peabody Museum by James Gunnerson (Gunnerson 1969 59 (2): 1-221). The attached map from the Claflin-Emerson Expedition although published 41 years late shows an even greater proliferation of Fremont sites than earlier shown by Morss (Gunnerson 1969:28). He estimates the Fremont population to "from a few thousand, probably no more than 10,000...." (Gunnerson 1969: 133-134). The area covering an "oval about 200 miles long and 100 miles wide." (Gunnerson 1969: 181) Gunnerson wrote that dating is extremely difficult due to the lack of tree ring specimens but feels the culture lasted perhaps 250 years and ended around A.D. 1200. (This date coincides with draughts between A.D. 1150 to 1166 but not the great draught of A.D. 1215-1299.) While another author (Madsen 1989: ix) feels that this culture developed much earlier and continued over a longer period of some 650 years (A.D. 650 to 1,250), most agree that the termination of the Fremont culture occurred around the time of the Great Draught.

There continues to be disagreement as to whether the Fremont originated with the Kayenta, Virgin branch of the Anasazi to the south (a view espoused by James Gunnerson), nomadic tribes to the north, or from Archaic peoples, or some combination of these. We will leave this to future scholars.

Now that we briefly have looked at the history of the Fremont Indians, it is time to become familiar with an important aspect of this river drainage area that is pertinent to the Fruita Map panel. The river rises in the Fish Lake Mountains around 10,000 feet, then it cuts through a valley at elevations from 6,000 to 7,200 feet (Gunnerson 1969: 73). At the former town of Fruita, the river passes through the Waterpocket Fold (Capitol Reef). Here millions of years ago, the rock strata was pushed up 1,000 feet in a fold, then dropped down again, then some seven to eight miles later, rose again to around 1,000 feet. Through this geological phenomenon flows the Fremont River. But why is this significant to our study? A current study of Utah petroglyphs suggests that a wavy line tends to indicate a mountainous area or cliffs. If we look at the Fruita petroglyph panel illustrated by Polly Schaafsma, we find this double vertical wavy line is in all probability the Fremont artist's rendition of the Waterpocket Fold (petroglyph panel attached).

If we study the area between these parallel wavy lines shown on the panel, we find that there is only a singing bird and unnamed animal in this area that would be the river valley floor. It is only outside the Waterpocket Fold, high on the cliffs, where we find the Big Horned Sheep. On the left side of the Fold, it would almost appear that the sheep are looking down into the valley from on high. Their position on the panel is certainly confirmed by their life style.

Now we are in a position to conclude our analysis. First, we need carefully to reexamine the petroglyph panel from Schaafsma's book (Schaafsma 1971: 47). Focus on the river system, noting that the Fremont River and Sulphur Creek come together near the west side of the Waterpocket Fold. (This is where our Capitol Reef map shows where the earlier town of Fruita was located and where to the west the present day Torrey is found.) Moving to our right along Page 8 the petroglyph panel (east), we cross the Waterpocket Fold (first wavy line) and evidence of river briefly disappears from the panel. Once past the second wavy line of the Waterpocket Fold, the Fremont River is represented by a strong line on the panel. Following this second wavy line down from the Fremont, we find the Pleasant Creek,

and still further east, we have the beginning of Sandy Creek (then an unexplained break), but it begins again and ends with a fork to the west (Oak Creek). (This follows its pattern on the U.S. Geological Survey maps!) Continuing along the Fremont River heading east, the river runs north, then level, then south. As it begins this modest hump, a stream flowing south from Hartnet Draw joins with the Fremont. This stream is unnamed. Continuing east we come to the end of the panel (our right) and the Fremont River moves sharply north. This is where on the Geological Survey Map, 1988 (Figure 1-C), it is joined by Muddy Creek and both flow into the Dirty Devil River which in turn joins the Colorado (not shown). Just below where the Fremont River turns sharply north is the town of Hanksville. From Hanksville direct to Torrey is 39 miles and since the panel extends slightly beyond Hanksville, we can conclude that the Fruita petroglyph panel extends around 40 miles west to east.

It is interesting that none of our authors have discussed this particular "Fruita Map Panel." The earliest writer, Noel Morss who properly identified this new Fremont culture, does not deal with this panel although he mentions stone circles in the area. Later Gunnerson writes "For about 0.4 miles along the Fremont River just below the town of Fruita, there is an almost continuous pictograph panel containing perhaps 300 separate figures." (Gunnerson 1969: 74) Kenneth Castleton in his monumental work Petroglyphs and Pictographs of Utah deals with a series of the Fruita glyphs (Castleton 1984: 143) and includes a part of the right side of the "Fruita Map Panel" with no discussion. While I discovered it late in my work, Polly Schaafsma in her thorough treatment in The Rock Art of Utah presents the most detailed drawing of this panel although there is no discussion on its possible meaning. This drawing was used as a basis for some of my observations.

After reviewing the written material on the Fremont, we must conclude that there are few and limited reference to rock art maps. (And from my general discussion with other scholars in the Hohokam, Mogollan, and Anasazi cultures, we find no detailed published maps among the other contemporaneous Southwest Indian cultures.)

Our study of maps of this area against the panel itself with particular reference to the presence and location of river systems, direction of the flow of a river, merger of creeks and rivers, and location of the Waterpocket Fold are the most significant factors in helping to validate that this Fruita panel is indeed a detailed map of the Fremont River system and the Waterpocket Fold. In the far right of the Schaafsma panel, the line representing the Fremont River goes sharply north, then level for a distance, then down and up. But a closer view of the far right of this panel (shown in the square on Figure 1-A) shows no line joining the Fremont from the north. Were we to accept this drawing, we would have to conclude that our original Fremont artist had omitted Muddy Creek, an important tributary to the Fremont. Fortunately, when we study a later drawing of this identical panel section done by consulting archaeologist V. Garth Norman who has worked with the Capitol Reef National Park (Figure 1-B), we find that in a more detailed drawing of this small segment, indeed a line joins the Fremont after it heads north. This would be Muddy Creek. (Labeling these rivers and creeks was the sole responsibility of the author.) This combined river system now becomes the Dirty Devil River which eventually joins the Colorado River (not shown). The final map on this important juncture of the Fremont and Muddy Creek is shown on the segment of the U.S. Geological Map, 1988 (Figure 1-C).

It is evident that there is a strong case that this Fremont panel is indeed the Fremont

River system and its tributaries and the Waterpocket Fold. Every major tributary of the Fremont River is found on this petroglyph panel! It also represents the hunter and his game. Is there a significance to the two front view, rigidly posed Fremont Indians? Could they be at the sites of early villages? Or more likely, is this an ownership or territorial statement? But the significant question was "Is this a map of the Fremont River system? Strong evidence certainly leads us toward the conclusion that this was a map of the Fremont land, his river system and its tributaries and his hunting resources. Should future research demonstrate that panel actually designates specific sites, then we shall firmly and finally establish for all time that it was both a map and a very specific statement of Fremont resources.

But what was the Fremont Indian thinking hundreds of years ago when he laboriously pecked this map of the Fremont River and its tributaries, and under it the two Indians, an arrowhead, big-horned sheep, deer or elk and other elements including the appealing chirping bird? What was he saying to his people? Did he intend for his message to go through generations to people yet unborn?

We will never know. Perhaps he was setting out the territory of his people. Perhaps he was saying "These are the rivers so important to our crops. Here are the animals we hunt. And here are we, the Fremont. This is our land." But we will never fully know.

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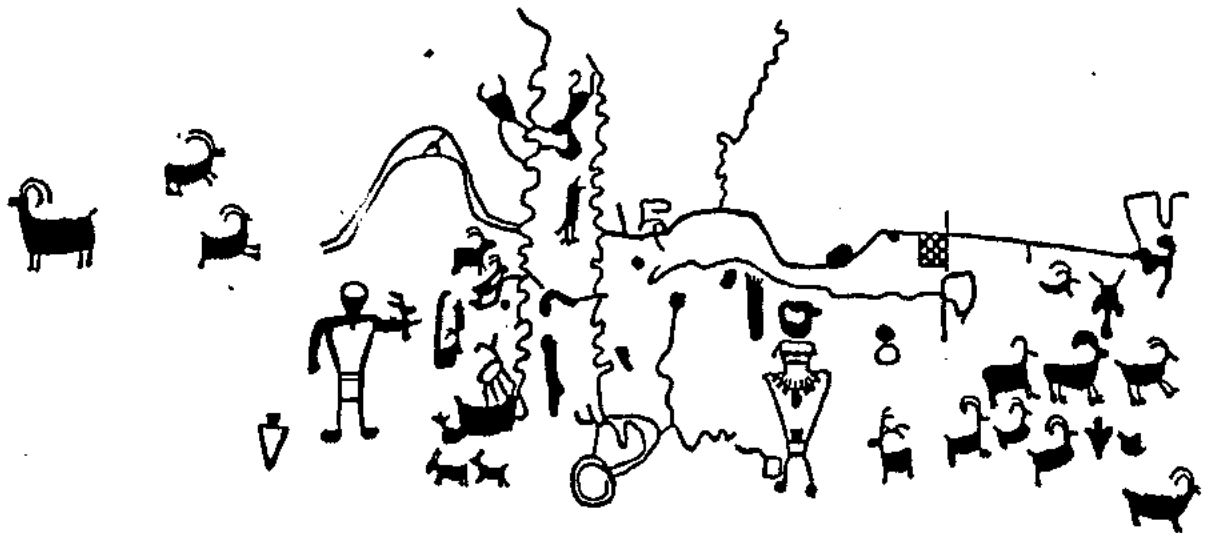
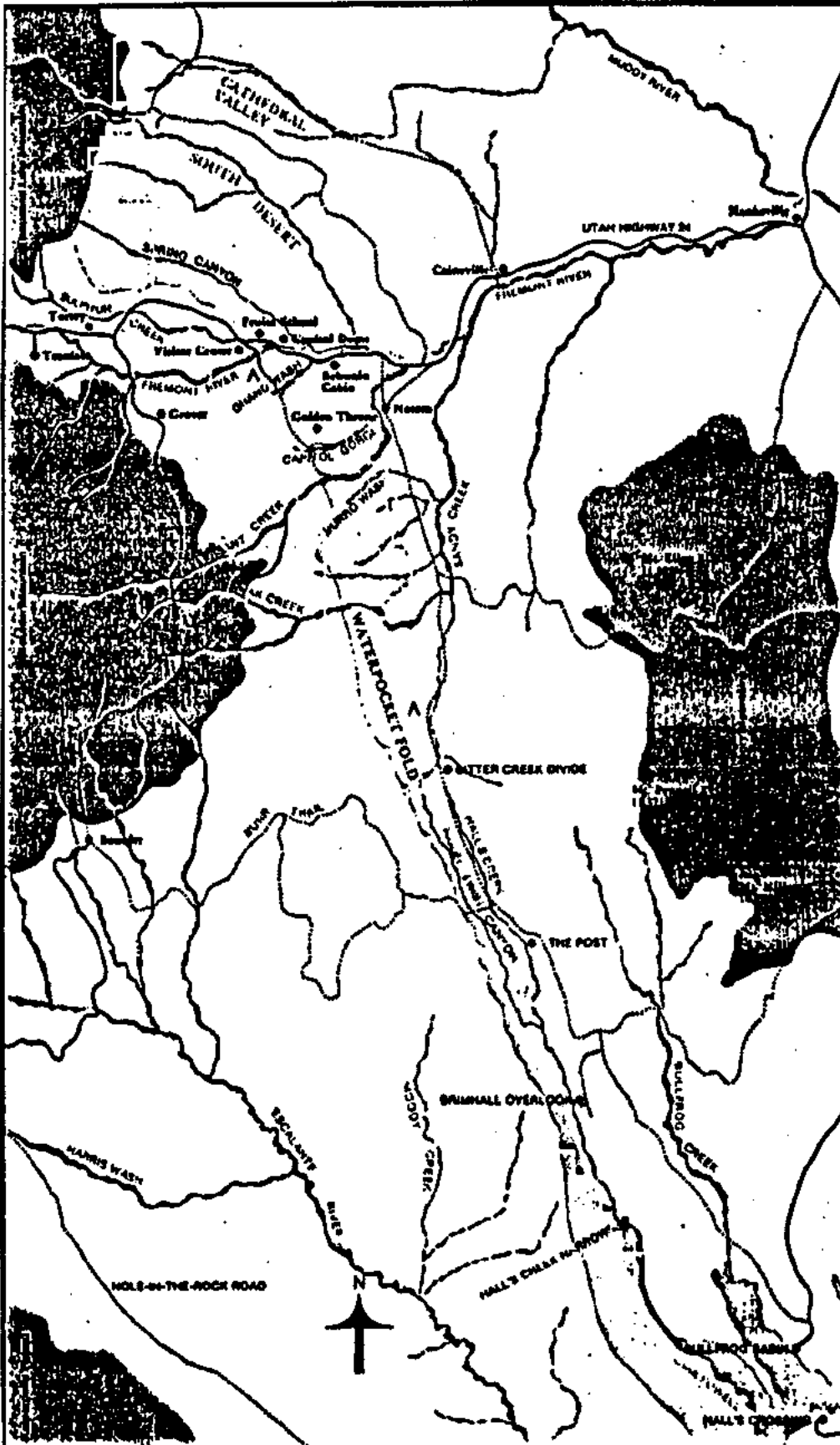







Figure 45 Petroglyphs, Fruita. Schaafsma, Polly, The Rock Art of Utah from The Donald Scott Collection, p. 47.



**Key:**

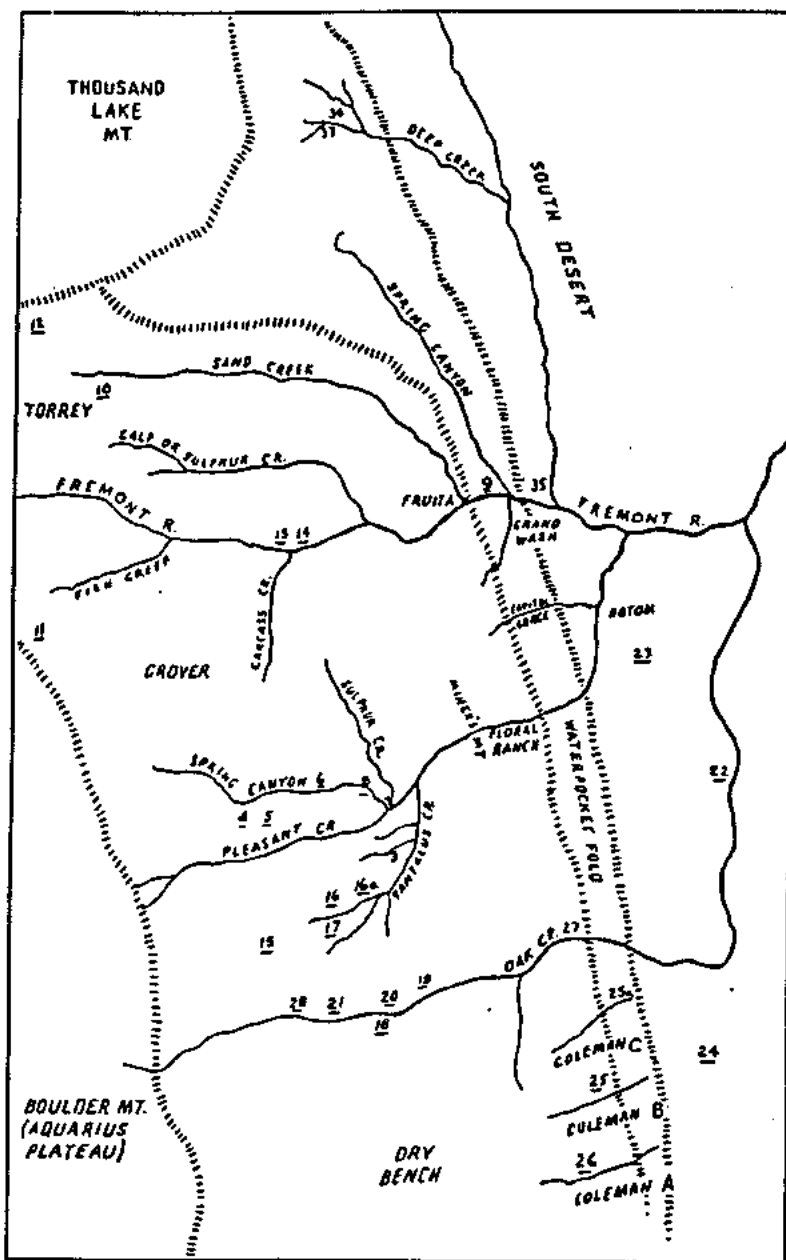
-  permanent streams
  -  intermittent streams
  -  paved highways
  -  unpaved roads
  -  park campground
- 0 2 km  
0 3 mi

*author's note:*  
My understanding of the spirit of Capitol Reef has gained much from thoughts and experiences shared with Kathy Foxworth, Mark Zarn, Don Trimble, Peg Johnson, Dave Johnson, Linda Keyser, Lee Keyser and Jay Cable. Thanks also to Ann Zwinger for suggestions to improve the text, to Bob Reynolds for helpful criticism and for making the book possible, and to Christina Watkins for continuing creativity and patience with me.

*page 20, Cutlar Behunin family courtesy Mrs. Ruby N. Tippets, Fruita school class courtesy National Park Service all other photography by author*

*designed by*  
Christina Watkins  
*edited by*  
Kathy Foxworth  
*printed by*  
Graphic Dimensions  
*words on back cover by*  
Kathy Foxworth





MAP OF A SECTION OF THE FREMONT DRAINAGE, SHOWING SITES BY NUMBERS

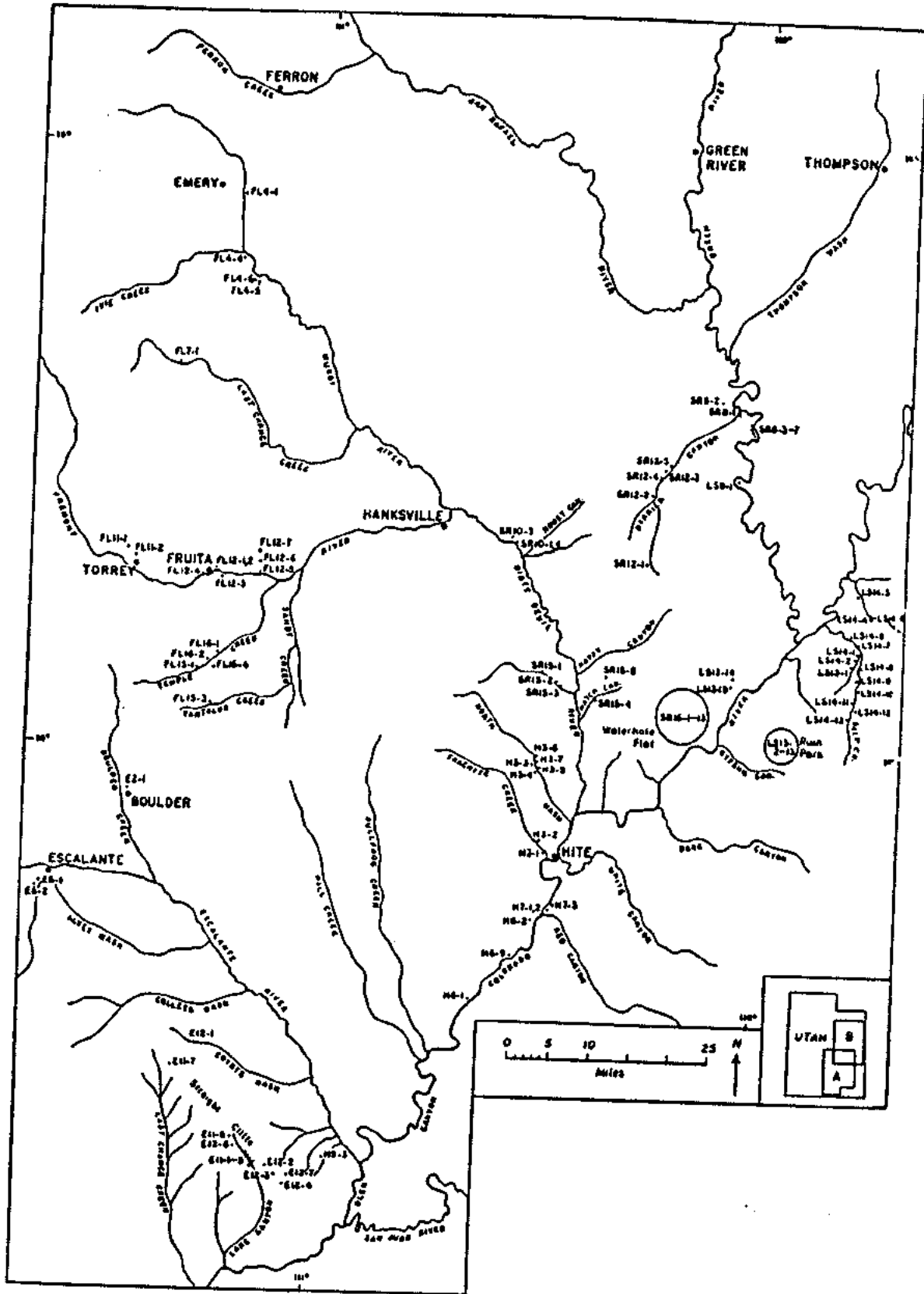
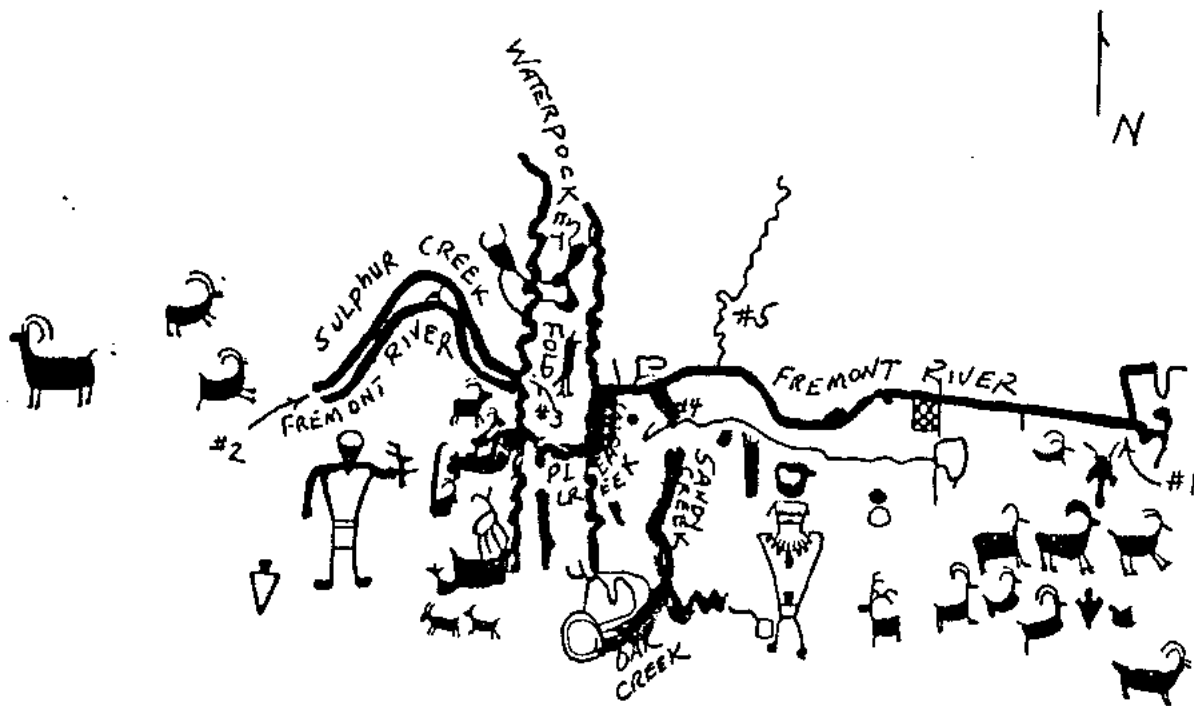


FIG. 2A. Locations of sites herein reported.



*WATERPOCKET FOLD*



### NUMBER INDEX

- #1 HANKSVILLE \*\*
- #2 TORREY \*\*
- #3 Fruita \*
- #4 SANDY CREEK IS NOT CONNECTED here in PETROGLYPH PANEL
- #5 UNNAMED STREAM FLOWING SOUTH FROM HARTNET DRAW

\* FREMONT RIVER IS NOT CONNECTED CROSSING WATERPOCKET FOLD.

\*\* LOCATION OF CURRENT CITIES ARE APPROXIMATE. MAP USED WAS 1988 DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, STATE OF UTAH, U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY. SCALE 1:500,000. 1 inch = 8 miles. SINCE THE DISTANCE BETWEEN TORREY (#2) AND HANKSVILLE (#1) DIRECTLY IS 39 MILES, THE EAST TO WEST DISTANCE SHOWN ON THIS FREMONT PETROGLYPH MAP IS ABOUT 40 MILES.

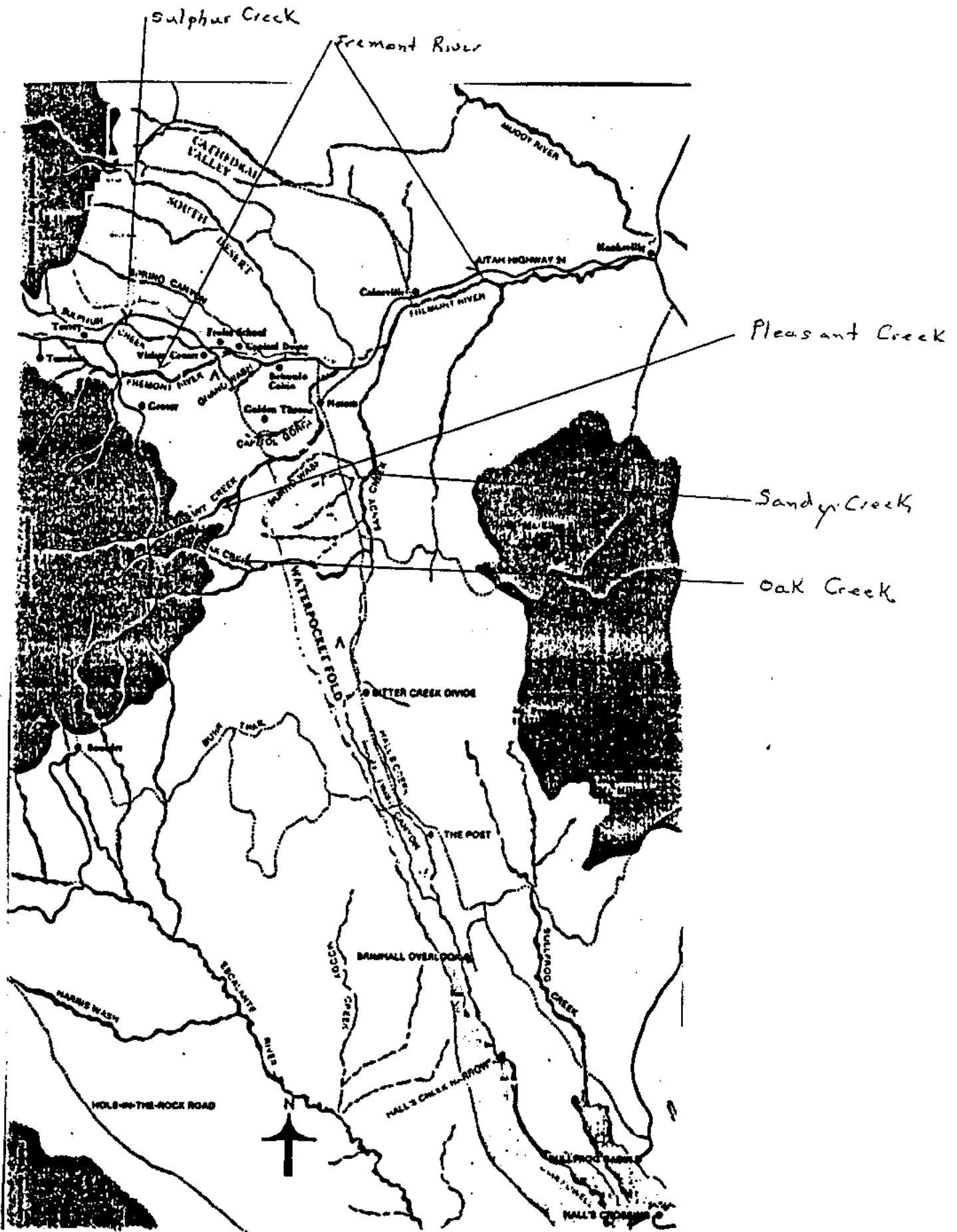
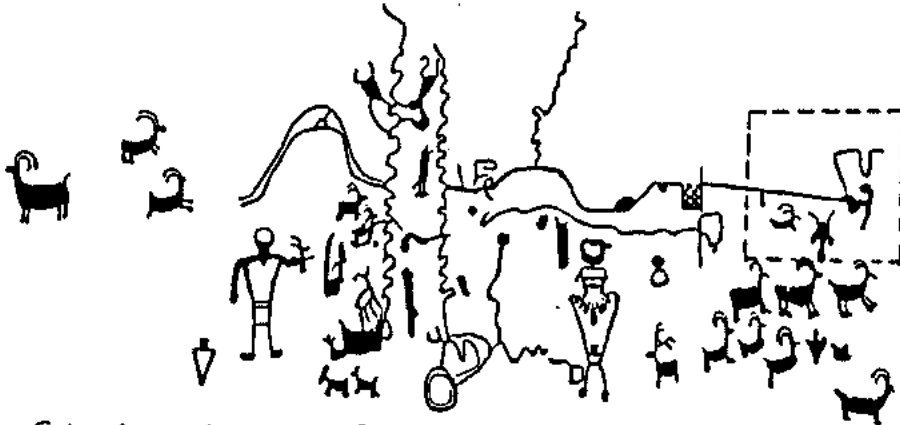
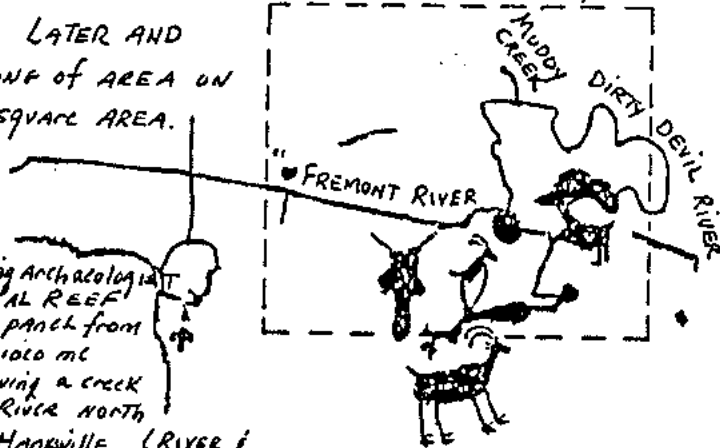


FIGURE 1-A FREMONT PANEL AT FRUITA



SCHAAPSTMA, POLLY, THE ROCK ART OF UTAH FROM THE DONALD SCOTT COLLECTION, p. 47. NOTE AREA IN SQUARE WHERE FREMONT RIVER HEADS NORTH BUT DRAWING SHOWS NO INTERSECTING LINE FROM TOP THAT COULD REPRESENT MUDDY CREEK.

FIGURE 1-B LATER AND MORE DETAILED DRAWING OF AREA ON FRUITA PANEL WITHIN SQUARE AREA.



V. GARTH NORMAN, CONSULTING ARCHAEOLOGIST WHO HAS WORKED WITH CAPITAL REEF NATIONAL PARKS DREW THE PATCH FROM PICTURES IN 1991 AND PROVIDED ME THIS CRITICAL SECTION SHOWING A CREEK COMING INTO THE FREMONT RIVER NORTH OF WHAT IS PRESENT DAY HANKSVILLE. (RIVER & CREEK LABELS WERE ADDED BY THE AUTHOR.)

FIGURE 1-C

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY MAP, 1988.

THIS SHOWS IN SQUARE WHERE FREMONT RIVER FLOWS NORTH AFTER PRESENT-DAY HANKSVILLE AND IS JOINED BY MUDDY CREEK.

