

# Pre-Hispanic Copper Artifacts Recovered from the Gila National Forest- Mimbres Area of Southwestern New Mexico

A Free Dinnertime Presentation by  
**Archaeologist Christopher D. Adams**

**Thursday  
7 to 8:30 p.m.  
August 19, 2021**

**Online via Zoom  
(See registration  
link below)**



Classic Mimbres Style III Bowl that may depict copper bells, from Gila National Forest - Bradsby Site, LA78337; Maxwell Museum No. 7758.42 (Photo by Christopher Adams)

In 2009, the discovery of a native copper nugget on a Classic Mimbres site located on the Gila National Forest in southwestern New Mexico initiated an archaeological investigation to determine whether there were more native copper nuggets or copper artifacts in the Mimbres area of the national forest. This preliminary investigation involved conducting archaeological surveys of a small sample of sites in the Mimbres area of the Gila National Forest, using the latest metal-sensing technology available and documenting the distribution of identified copper nuggets and artifacts.

This presentation will highlight the results of the metal-sensing survey. More importantly, however, it will focus on the ancient exploitation of natural and worked copper nuggets, and fragmented, crushed, and complete copper artifacts including bells, fetishes, and other items discovered recently adjacent to Mimbres pithouses and Classic Mimbres pueblo sites dating between 950 and 1130.

(See next page.)

**To register for the Zoom program go to**

**[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_U4MT21z6Qhm-jP4XMblodw](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_U4MT21z6Qhm-jP4XMblodw)**

**For more information contact Old Pueblo at [520-798-1201](tel:520-798-1201) or [info@oldpueblo.org](mailto:info@oldpueblo.org).**

Flyer date:  
May 16, 2021



# Pre-Hispanic Copper Artifacts . . .

**Twelve years of on-going research** by Gila National Forest archaeologist Christopher D. Adams has resulted in identification of 97 pre-Hispanic, Mimbres culture copper artifacts: 73 native copper nuggets, 3 fetishes, 3 clapper bells, 15 other copper bells, 2 pendants, and 1 hammered/worked copper artifact. Adams has surveyed approximately 30 Mimbres sites on the Gila National Forest and, in addition, 6 native copper nuggets have been re-identified in Mimbres collections of New Mexico museums.

Of unique importance is a Mimbres Classic Black-on-white Style III bowl excavated from the Bradsby Site (LA78337) on the Gila National Forest that exhibits what appear to be stylized images of copper bells. Dr. Steven Shackley's x-ray fluorescence analyses on 70 of the Mimbres copper artifacts initially suggest the copper came from the same production event and/or same smelter for the copper bells. The closest source for the Mimbres copper would have been in the area of the Santa Rita Copper Mine. Unfortunately, any surface copper areas that would have been mined there by the Mimbres people have since been disturbed by 20th-century mining so there are no traces of Mimbres mining there today. Sourcing of the Mimbres copper is still underway.



Mimbres copper bells recovered from Gila National Forest Mimbres sites



**Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's guest speaker Christopher D. Adams** is the East Zone Archaeologist for the Black Range & Wilderness Ranger Districts, Gila National Forest, New Mexico. Mr. Adams received his B.A. from Arizona State University and has been working in archaeology for well over 35 years in both the private and federal sectors. He has been with the Gila National Forest Heritage Program for 14 years and with the US Forest Service for 24 as a professional archaeologist.

Mr. Adams has been using metal-sensing technology for over 30 years in North America. He is one of the leading experts in the Apache Indian War period and in the identification of Spanish Colonial period artifacts in the southwestern US.

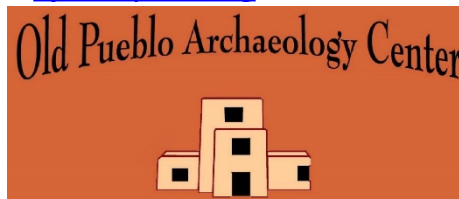


Above: Native copper nugget pendant



Center: Mimbres copper fetishes (top row) and smashed copper bells

**For more information contact**  
**Old Pueblo Archaeology Center at**  
**[info@oldpueblo.org](mailto:info@oldpueblo.org) or 520-798-1201**



Above: Native copper nugget recovered from Twin Pines Village, LA75947, on Gila National Forest

All photos courtesy of Christopher Adams