

# The Fremont Frontier: Southwestern Cousins or Great Basin Copycats?



Free Zoom Presentation by  
Archaeologist Katie K. Richards, PhD

Thursday  
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7 to 8:30 pm  
Mountain Standard Time

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# The Fremont Frontier . . .



Map showing approximate limits of Fremont and Ancestral Pueblo archaeological cultures (Allen Dart, Old Pueblo Archaeology Center)

For decades, archaeologists have debated how best to interpret the Fremont region that is located along the far northern extreme of the North American Southwest. Peoples living there demonstrated both a distinct connection to and isolation from their Puebloan neighbors. Around 1000 CE many southwestern traits – aggregated villages, painted pottery, and surface architecture – appeared suddenly in the Fremont region, accompanied by an influx in population.

Fremont material culture has clear parallels to the early Pueblo II period in the Four Corners region. However, despite significant changes in the northern Southwest’s pottery styles during the PII and PIII periods, Fremont potters continued using the same “Pueblo II-esque” designs for roughly 300 years.

Because of the Fremont’s unique position, its material remains often have presented as an intriguing and confusing syncretic blend of “southwestern” and “other.” This has led many Fremont archaeologists to downplay similarities between the

two regions, choosing instead to focus on Fremont as a local development with occasional southwestern innovations diffusing north. Dr. Katie Richards argues, instead, that Fremont is best understood when resituated as the northern periphery of the Southwest. Examining Fremont within the context of the social changes that occurred during the Pueblo II and III periods presents an engaging history of identity creation and maintenance not evident otherwise.

## This month’s guest presenter Dr. Katie K. Richards

received her BA and MA from Brigham Young University and her PhD from Washington State University. She has been an active field archaeologist for 15 years and has worked at a variety of sites. Most of her fieldwork has focused on Utah, where she has had opportunities to excavate the largest known Fremont pit structure, a Pueblo III great house with a megalithic colonnade, one of the earliest Pueblo I villages, and in the Promontory Caves.

Her research primarily focuses on understanding social organization and identity in the Fremont region. Though she specializes in Fremont, she also has years of experience excavating Ancestral Pueblo sites in southeastern Utah. Her work in both regions is what initially sparked her desire to better understand the relationships between Fremont and Ancestral Pueblo peoples.



Photos courtesy of Dr. Richards and the Museum of Peoples and Cultures, Brigham Young University

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