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2004

PVC-Excavation Report-Site 162

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Schortman, Edward, "PVC-Excavation Report-Site 162" (2004). *Four Valleys Archive*. Paper 71477.
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Site PVC 162

Site PVC162 occupies sloping terrain just northeast of the summit of a steep hill located ca. 1.5km southwest of, and 75m above and overlooking, the site of El Coyote. Four of the site's diminutive constructions (Strs. 162-1/4) surround a patio fronted on its northeast side by three low terraces (Str. 162-5/7) set in a rough southwest-northeast line perpendicular to the hill's slope. The land rises from the northwest and southeast to the relatively flat surface occupied by Strs. 162-1/4. The surrounding terrain is characterized by thin soils pierced by numerous limestone outcrops. The closest current source of perennially running water is the Rio Cacaupala, about 1.25km to the east. Several seasonal run-offs bound the promontory on the east and north, cutting deep defiles into the hill's base. A total of 73.5m² was cleared in the course of exposing approximately 90% of Str. 162-1 and 60% of Str. 162-2. The work was directed from May 31-June 8, 2004 by Charles Webber and Leigh-Anne Ellison.

Structure 162-1

Structure 162-1 occupies the southwest flank of the patio, lying 5.8m, and across the plaza, from Str. 162-2 and about 9m northwest of Str. 162-4 which borders the patio on the south. The building was raised on land that rose 0.8m over 6.1m northeast-to-southwest while the terrain is more-or-less level over the building's 5.6m width (running northwest to southeast). Excavations in Subop. 162E, F, I, J, N, and Q cleared ca. 37m² of Str. 162-1, digging being carried down to maximum depths of 0.47m and 0.57m below modern ground surface within and outside construction, respectively. One major building phase with three principal episodes of renovation were recognized in the course of this work which was overseen by Leigh-Anne Ellison.

Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Dates
1	-	-	S.1, 2	-	
2	Str. 162-1-Sub1	U.1	-	-	
3	-	-	S.3	-	
4	Str. 162-1-1 st	U.2-7, 10	-	-	
5	Str. 162-1-1 st	U.7-9, 11-14, 26, 28	-	F.2	
6	Str. 162-1-1 st	U.15-25, 27	-	-	
7	-	-	S.4	F.1	

Time Span 1

The first activity recognized in the vicinity of Str. 162-1 was the deposition of a culturally sterile, brown, soft-compacted soil composed of decaying limestone (S.1). Stratum 1 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.29m (its base was not encountered) in a probe dug off Str. 162-1-1st's southeast flank. This earth layer ascends 0.13m over 9m southeast-to-northwest. Overlying S.1 by 0.16m on the southeast is a dark brown, very hard-compacted soil containing numerous rocks and no cultural material (S.2). Stratum 2 was not encountered elsewhere around the building and rises 0.06m over the 0.5m it was exposed from southeast-to-

northwest. Strata 1 and 2 were apparently formed on decaying bedrock, their formation predating occupation of the hilltop.

Time Span 2

During this interval a semi-circular or circular surface composed of unshaped, angular limestone fragments (U.1, Str. 162-1-Sub1) was laid down. Unit 1 measures 2.35m across and was found projecting a maximum of 0.65m southwest of Str. 162-1-1st's southwest flank (from beneath U.2 and 8). In general, U.1's perimeter is defined by moderately large stones that contain an area of smaller rocks. Only about half of U.1 was exposed, the rest remaining covered by TS.4 and 5 construction. No other architecture was clearly associated with U.1

Time Span 3

Unit 1 was buried by as much as 0.12m of a soft-compacted brown to dark gray soil that contains numerous small limestone inclusions (S.3). Stratum 3 blankets S.1 by 0.06-0.14m and underlies all later constructions.

Time Span 4

The earliest version of Str. 162-1-1st of which we have direct evidence consists of a small platform bordered on the northwest by a room built directly on ancient ground surface. The platform is bounded by stone facings that stand 0.3-0.58m tall (U.1-4, higher on the downslope northeast than on the upslope southwest sides) that are 0.36-0.43m wide and together delimit a featureless earthen-floored summit encompassing 0.82x1.32m. The fill retained by U.1-4 (U.10) is a dark reddish-brown, soft-textured, clayey loam that contains a scattering of small to medium-size stones.

Adjoining this platform on the northwest is an earthen-floored compartment (Room 1) the interior of which measures 1.33x1.9m. Room 1 is bordered by the aforementioned platform on the southeast (U.5), delimited by stone foundations (U.6, 7, and 8) that are 0.3-0.5m wide by 0.15-0.33m tall, and was open on the southwest. Access to the compartment was likely achieved by passing through this 1.33m-wide entrance. Either soon after Str. 162-1-1st was erected or later in TS.4 this passage was narrowed to 0.5m by the construction of U.8. This wall projects 0.83m northwest from its intersection with U.2 which it also abuts.

By the conclusion of TS.4, Str. 162-1-1st covered 2.16x3.33m and was aligned roughly 128 degrees. The edifice was anchored on the southeast by a stone-faced, earth-and-stone-filled platform that stood 0.3-0.58m tall, covered 1.52x2.14m, and supported a featureless, earthen-floored summit measuring 1.1m². The discrepancies in the platform's heights are largely due to its having been erected over a northeast-to-southwest rise in the terrain. Built against the platform's northwest flank is an earthen-floored cubicle (Room 1) raised directly on ancient ground surface. Bordered by the platform on the southeast and stone foundations on the remaining sides, Room 1's interior covers 2.5m² and was entered through a 0.5m-wide door in its west corner. No built-in furniture was recorded in this space. Given the platform's small size, it is possible that it is a bench facing into Room 1. All constructions raised now were fashioned primarily of modified and unmodified angular limestone along with some unidentified soft igneous rocks. A few of these latter examples may have been purposefully shaped and there was a tendency to direct their flatter faces outwards. All of the rocks were set in a mud mortar.

Time Span 5

During this interval Str. 162-1-1st was expanded considerably on the northeast. Here a 0.21m-tall earthen-surfaced terrace now projects 1.98m northeast from what had been the northeast flank of Str. 162-1-1st during TS.4 (U.4 and 6). This addition, designated Room 2, is bounded on all sides by low facings (U.11, 12, 13, and a northeastern extension of U.7) that contain a fill composed of a reddish-brown, hard-compacted, fine-textured soil with numerous small stone inclusions (U.26). Room 2 contains a 0.25m-tall stone-faced, earth-surfaced bench (U.14) that extends 1.7m northwest from the southeast terrace wall (U.11). Unit 14 is 0.91m-wide northeast-southwest and takes up the entirety of the terrace's east corner. A 0.2m-wide wall projects 0.5m northwest of U.14's northwest end, running in line with the bench's southwest face (included in U.14). This extension creates a cubicle measuring 0.6x0.7m bordering U.14's northwest flank in Room 2's north corner. A 0.15m-wide gap in the compartment's west corner may have facilitated ventilating, but not passing into, the cubicle's interior. The area of the summit lying southwest of U.14 encompasses 0.83x2.35m whereas Room 2 covers 1.74x2.4m overall.

We infer that about the same time Room 1's western door was sealed by the construction of a 0.2m-tall by 0.3m-wide extension of U.8. Subsequently the former compartment was filled with earth (U.28) creating an earthen-floored summit covering 1.33x1.55m. Occupying the northeast half of this elevated surface is a 0.15m-high stone-faced, earth-surfaced shelf (U.9). Unit 9 runs for the summit's full northwest-southeast width (1.33m) and is 0.85m wide northeast-southwest.

As TS.5 drew to a close, Str. 162-1-1st measured 3.33x4.17m, retained its earlier alignment of ca. 128 degrees, and consisted of earthen-floored spaces distributed across several levels. The former platform bounded by U.2-5 now occupied the edifice's southern corner and stands 0.19m and 0.35m above the newly elevated Room 1 on the northwest and Room 2 atop the northeast terrace, respectively. The former was elevated by sealing what had been its west door and filling the interior with dirt. The resulting compartment measures 2.1m² and contains a 0.15m-high shelf. The latter is built against Room 1's northeast wall, measures 0.85m across, and runs across the compartment's full northwest-southeast width (1.33m). The northeast terrace supports Room 2 which measures 4.2m² and contains a bench raised against its northeast side. The bench is 0.25m tall, measures 0.91m wide, and projects 1.7m northwest from the terrace's southeast facing. A cubicle covering 0.4m² borders the bench's northwest flank. The open space separating the bench from Room 1 and the low platform on the southwest measures 2m². Constructions built at this time were primarily fashioned using unmodified angular rocks set in a mud mortar. Several of these stones may have been modified and their flatter faces (artificially shaped or not) are generally directed outwards. Most of the rocks seem to be limestone though a minority are soft, igneous stones.

Time Span 6

The primary changes visited on Str. 162-1-1st during this interval consist of building rooms adjoining the edifice raised during TS.5 but erected on ancient ground surface. Room 5 is set against the building's southeast flank and is bordered on the southeast, northeast and southwest by stone foundations that stand 0.2-0.35m tall and are 0.25-0.3m wide (U.15, 16, and 18). This space covers 1.9x2.6m. A 1.2m-wide gap in the enclosure's east corner provided access to its earthen-floored interior while Room 5's northwest flank is bordered by U.3 and 11.

A 0.2m-high by 0.75m-wide stone-faced bench (U.17) was built against Room 5's southwest interior wall, running the full northwest-southeast width of the enclosure (1.9m). What looks to have been a fill composed of dark reddish-brown, soft-textured, clayey loam (U.27) was laid down prior to Room 5's construction. Unit 27 is at least 0.2m thick and may have been introduced to level out the terrain under the enclosure.

Built against Room 5's northeast side and bordering the east corner of the northeast terrace is Room 3. The U.18 footing separates Rooms 3 and 5. Room 3's earthen-floored interior measures an estimated 1.45x1.5m (its northeast and southeast flanks were only partially exposed) and may have been accessed through a door in its east corner (this area was not sufficiently excavated to determine the dimensions, or even the existence, of such a portal). The foundation delimiting the compartment's northwest flank is 0.25m high by 0.35m wide (U.19). No built-in furniture was recorded within Room 3.

Room 4 was raised against Str. 162-1-1st's northwest flank and is bordered by U.7 on the southeast and stone foundations standing 0.25m high and measuring 0.25m and 0.6m across (U.21 and 20, respectively). The earthen-floored space contained by U.7, 20, and 21 encompasses 0.5x0.65m and is apparently open on the southwest. It may be that, given its relatively broad width (0.6m across), U.20 served double-duty as a shelf and wall support. A dense concentration of broken sherds (F.2) was found within Room 4.

A wall (U.22), standing 0.28m tall, was built against the northeast terrace's northeast flank beginning 0.6m southeast of that terrace's north corner. Unit 22 projects 0.3m northeast of the terrace's northeast facing (U.12 and 13) and runs for 0.75m to the southeast before encountering U.25. The latter wall is 0.22m tall, 0.2m wide, and abuts U.12 on the southwest. Unit 25 extends at least 0.5m to the northeast before disintegrating; we did not find a formal ending for this construction unit. Unit 22 may have served as a stone shelf appended to Str. 162-1st's northeast side and delimited on the southeast by a low footing (U.25).

Unit 7, Str. 162-1-1st's northwest perimeter wall (U.7), was added to during TS.6. This embellishment took the form of a 0.25m-wide block of stone that extends U.7 for 0.4m southwest of the building's west corner. The purpose of this renovation remains unclear.

Late in the construction sequence, a casually fashioned stone surface (U.23) was added, extending 2m northeast of Str. 162-1-1st. The dimensions of this construction are unclear, the surface following the southwest-to-northeast descent of the ancient ground surface (dropping 0.3m over this distance).

By TS.6's conclusion Str. 162-1-1st consisted of a core platform that remained unchanged from TS.5 and which was bounded on all sides save the southwest by earthen-floored rooms raised on ancient ground surface and bounded by foundations standing 0.2-0.35m high by 0.25-0.6m wide. The largest of these enclosures (Room 5) is set against the platform's southeast flank, its interior covering 4.9m². A 1.2m-wide door in the east corner provided access to Room 5 while a 0.2m-high by 0.75m-wide stone-faced bench is set against the southwest wall and runs the full 1.9m northwest-southeast width of the enclosure. Immediately northeast of Room 5 and set against the platform's east corner is Room 3. This compartment's interior covers approximately 2.2m², may have been entered through a door in the east corner, and seems to have contained no built-in furniture. Room 4 is a diminutive cubicle measuring 0.3m² built against the platform's northwest facing just 0.15m southwest of its north corner. The enclosure is open on the southwest and bordered on the northeast by a

foundation the relatively unusual width (0.6m) of which may suggest that it doubled as a wall support and shelf. In addition to these enclosures, a 0.28m-tall, 0.3m-wide, and 0.75m-long construction was raised against the platform's northeast flank, 0.6m southeast of the building's north corner. This entity, which may have served as a shelf, was bounded on the southeast by a 0.22m-high, poorly preserved wall that projected at least 0.5m northeast of the platform. Towards the end of TS.6 a casually made stone surface was added fronting Str. 162-1-1st's northeast side. This flooring extends 2m northeast of the edifice and follows the natural southwest-to-northeast slope of the terrain, dropping 0.3m over this distance.

Constructions raised during TS.6 were primarily fashioned of white (possibly limestone) angular rocks set in a mud mortar. A few of the stones may have been slightly modified and there was a tendency to set these rocks in such a way that their naturally flatter aspects were directed outwards. A minority of the rocks used now were of a soft stone of likely igneous origin

Time Span 7

After Str. 162-1-1st was abandoned all but the uppermost parts of the standing architecture were covered by a soft-compacted, black, root-rich humus horizon (S.4). Stratum 4 accumulated to thicknesses of 0.08-0.24m. Embedded within this layer is a very light scattering of rocks (F.1) that likely fell from final-phase architecture. Feature 1 was primarily found off the building's down-sloping northeast side where it was traced for 0.3m away from construction.

Structure 162-2

Structure 162-2, the largest building at the settlement, is 5.8m northeast and across the plaza from Str. 162-1 and about 2.5m northwest of Str. 162-3. The land on which this edifice was erected ascends 0.74m over 11.96m from northeast to southwest and 0.66m across 11m from southeast to northwest. Digging here in Subop. 162B, C, D, G, H, K, and L exposed ca. 36.5m², digging reaching maximum depths of 0.57m and 0.44m below modern ground surface atop and beyond architecture, respectively. These investigations, overseen by Charles Webber, revealed two major construction episodes.

Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Dates
1	-	-	S.1	-	-
2	Str. 162-2-1 st	U.1-14, 22	-	F.3, 4, 5	
3	Str. 162-2-1 st	U.15-19, 21	-	F.1	
4	Str. 162-2-1 st	U.20, 23, 24	-	-	
5	-	-	S.2	F.2	

Time Span 1

During TS.1 at least 0.27m of a light brownish-gray, soft-compacted, coarse-textured soil (S.1) was deposited in the area that would be occupied by Str. 162-2-1st (S.1's base was not revealed). Stratum 1 did not contain cultural materials but numerous fragments of white rocks, probably limestone, were scattered throughout it. Those rock fragments most likely derived from the underlying bedrock. Stratum 1 rose 0.74m over 11.96m from northeast to southwest and 0.66m across 11m from southeast to northwest.

Time Span 2

Structure 162-2-1st was, during TS.2, a platform that supported four clear enclosures on its summit. The building stood 0.5-0.86m tall and was bounded by vertical stone facings (U.1-4). Structure 162-2-1st is highest on its northeast (0.86m) and southeast flanks (0.74m) where the terrain is rising towards the building. A 0.27m-high step projects 1.2m southwest and into the patio from the center of the platform's southwest flank (U.5-7). This ascent is 3.1m wide northwest-southeast and leads directly into Room 1. This earthen-floored compartment measures 2.2m on a side and is bordered by two smaller enclosures on its northwest and southeast. Room 2 on the southeast encompasses 1.6x1.7m while its counterpart on the northwest, Room 3, covers 1.1x1.8m. Both Rooms 2 and 3 are surfaced with a hard white plaster (U.8 in Room 3 and U.9 in Room 2) portions of which show signs of burning. These areas of discoloration (F.3-5) are light red (2.5YR 7/6 and 5YR 6/6) and are found in the center of Room 3 (F.5, about 0.7m in diameter), the middle of Room 2 (F.3, ca. 0.4m in diameter), and in Room 2's south corner (F.4, 0.7m across its longest dimension). Located 0.03-0.05m below U.8 was a stone surface (U.22) that may have served as subfloor for the later plaster surface. A change in construction in the southwestern-most 0.42m of U.11 (the footing separating Rooms 1 and 2) may point to the existence of a door that formerly connected Rooms 1 and 2. This passage was apparently sealed during TS.3. Room 4 backs Rooms 1-3 on the northeast and was entered through a 1.3m-wide door set near the middle of Room 1's northeastern foundation (U.14). Room 4 measures 0.5x4.95m and is surfaced with earth. None of these enclosures contains built-in furniture and they are all bordered by the basal platform facings (U.1-4) and stone foundations that are 0.1-0.3m high by 0.3-0.5m wide (U.10-14).

As TS.2 drew to a close Str. 162-2-1st was a stone-faced platform that stood 0.5-0.86m tall, measured 3.75x6m (excluding the southwest step), and was aligned roughly 130 degrees. A 0.27m-tall by 3.1m-wide step projects 1.2m southwest into the patio from the center of the building's southwest facing and provided access to the summit. That summit supported four rooms bounded by stone foundations standing 0.1-0.3m high and measuring 0.3-0.5m wide. Three of the enclosures (Rooms 1-3) are set at about the same level in a northwest-southeast line along the platform's southwest, patio-facing side while Room 4 backs these compartments on the northeast. Room 1 directly faced out and over the southwest step, its earthen-floored interior encompassing 4.8m². To the southeast and northwest of this central space are two plaster-surfaced cubicles that cover 2.7m² (Room 2 on the southeast) and 2m² (Room 3 on the northwest). The floors of Rooms 2 and 3 show signs of burning. While there is no clear door issuing into Room 3 on the northwest, a 0.42m-wide passage in Room 2's west corner may have facilitated movement between it and Room 1. Room 4, which was reached by passing through a 1.3m-wide door in Room 1's northeast foundation, covers 2.5m², has an earthen floor, and is very narrow (0.5m across). None of these enclosures contained built-in furniture. Constructions raised during TS.2 were fashioned primarily of shaped limestone along with a few rocks that appear to be vesicular basalt, all set in a mud mortar. The flat faces of the component stones are directed outwards.

Time Span 3

Structure 162-2-1st's core platform remained largely unmodified during this interval. The major changes visited on the building consisted of expanding its basal dimensions by erecting a ca. 0.26m-0.45m-high stone-faced (U.15-18), earth-and-stone-filled (U.21) terrace that envelopes the TS.2 structure on all sides. This terrace projects 1.2m, 0.95m, and 0.8m

northeast, southeast, and northwest of the earlier platform while on the southwest U.15 continues the southwest line of U.6, the southwest basal riser of the southwest step (1.2m southwest of Str. 162-2-1st's southwest basal wall, U.1). A 0.21m-tall by 0.1-0.3m-wide wall (U.19) was raised atop the southwest terrace. Unit 19 defines a sinuous course, intersecting U.1 at a point 0.35m northwest of U.5 (the northwest side of the southwest step). From there U.19 projects 0.25m southwest of U.1 before turning to run 0.85m to the northwest at which point it turns again to extend at least 0.5m to the southwest (this is where excavation ceased; U.19 may well have continued the remaining 0.55m to U.15's southwest edge). The architectural significance of U.19 is unclear; it may, with U.1 and 5, have delimited an enclosure that covered 0.95x1.15m that was open on the southwest. A deposit of cultural debris at least 0.2m thick (F.1; its base was not encountered) accumulated against the building's northwest wall during TS.3. Feature 1 was traced for 2m northwest of Str. 162-2-1st.

By the end of TS.3, Str. 162-2-1st was a 0.5-0.86m-tall stone faced platform that retained its earlier alignment of ca. 130 degrees and arrangement of rooms in its superstructure. The edifice's basal dimensions were greatly expanded to 6.3x7.85m through the erection of a 0.26-0.45m-tall, stone-faced terrace that surrounded the TS.2 core platform on all sides. The southwestern step was absorbed within this new construction while an earthen-floored room covering 1.1m² was apparently raised northwest of that projection atop the southwestern terrace. In contrast to TS.2 building styles, TS.3 architecture was fashioned primarily of unmodified river cobbles set in a mud mortar. The naturally flatter aspects of these rocks were directed outwards.

Time Span 4

It was during this interval that Room 2 was filled with 0.15-0.2m of a fine-textured, reddish-gray, soft-textured clay capped with a layer of small angular rocks (U.23). Room 1, in its turn, was sealed with a different material consisting primarily of rocks mixed with some dirt (U.24). When the door connecting Rooms 1 and 2 was filled is unclear; it may have been now or during TS.3. At about the same time a casually fashioned stone surface (U.20) was laid down off Str. 162-2-1st's south corner. The extent of this rough floor is hard to determine as its margins were poorly defined when excavated. That said, we estimate that U.20 extended 1.1m southeast of the platform's southeast basal terrace facing (U.16) and may have wrapped around the building's south corner. Unit 20 resembles, and occupies a similar stratigraphic position to, Str. 162-1-1st's late U.23 floor. They may both be roughly contemporary.

Time Span 5

After Str. 162-2-1st's abandonment extant architecture was buried by 0.05-0.35m of a dark gray topsoil (S.2). Embedded in S.2 is a light concentration of stones fallen from final-phase architecture (F.2). Feature 2 was traced for as much as 1.2m from TS.3 architecture.

References

For more information on investigations pursued at Site PVC 162 please see:

McFarlane, William and Edward Schortman

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